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Semiotics of Music, Semiotics of Sound, and Film: Toward a Theory of Acousticons

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Semiotics of Music, Semiotics of Sound, and Film: Toward a Theory of Acousticons

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Semiotics of Music, Semiotics of Sound, and Film: Toward a Theory of Acousticons

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Topic theory, the study of conventional musical figures, has emerged as a significant method of analysis for music scholars in the last thirty years. Much current research critically interprets and contextualizes topics from a variety of musical eras and styles, including film music. However, studying film presents music scholars with a new set of issues since the filmic medium not only includes visual signs in the form of the image track, but also another category of sonic signs in the form of sound design. In film sound tracks, musical signs and sonic signs frequently butt up against one another and even pass into one another's domain.

My dissertation seeks to bridge the current gap between music figures and sound figures by arguing that musical figures are best considered as a special case of general sound figures that I call *acousticons*. Acousticons are conventionalized figures of music or sound (e.g. reverb, fidelity) and they exist on a continuum defined by the poles of purely musical codes on the one hand and purely sonic codes on the other. Chapter 1 presents a general model of the acousticon using Peirce's modes of the sign. It interrogates iconic models presented in media studies and iconography as possible corollaries to the sound track. Chapter 2 and 3 present case studies of acousticons. Chapter 2 gives a case study of acousticons of the subjective interior in the form of the

lowered submediant and subjective, point-of-audition sound. Chapter 3 considers how films deploy reverberation and low fidelity recordings acousticonically to bring about different types of nostalgia. Chapter 4 considers the potential for acousticons outside of the sound track medium. It looks at how acousticons might work in audio branding. Specifically, it looks at the construction of sonic logos, product sound, and the use of popular music in advertising and product design.

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Introduction: Musical Topics, Sonic Signs, and How a Sound Track Works

There is a moment near the beginning of Miloš Forman's film *Amadeus* (1984) that will particularly resonate with music theorists and their inclination toward analysis. In it, Salieri (F. Murray Abraham) stumbles upon a musical score left on the conductor's podium by Mozart (Tom Hulce), as seen in Figure 1. It is the Serenade No. 10 for 13 Wind Instruments in B-Flat Major, K. 361 with the score left open to the third movement, the Adagio. The film unfolds mostly in flashbacks and Salieri, now an old man, describes to a visiting priest while the image track shows a younger version of the composer inspecting the score. As he looks, the musical notes before him magically transform from written notation in the image track to musical sound in the sound track. Meanwhile, the older Salieri describes what he heard:

> On the page it looked nothing, the beginning simple, almost comic; just a pulse—bassoons and basset horns—like a rusty squeezebox. Then, suddenly, high above it, an oboe. A single note, hanging there unwavering, until a clarinet took over and sweetened it into a phrase of such delight. This was no composition by a performing monkey! This was music I'd never heard. Filled with such longing, such unfulfillable longing, it had me trembling. It seemed to me that I was hearing the very voice of God.

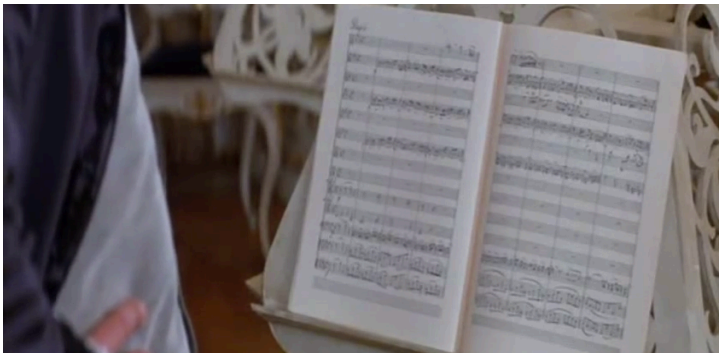

Figure 1a: A young Salieri looks at Mozart's score

Figure 1b: Reverse shot of Salieri

Although Salieri attends a performance of the Serenade just prior to this moment, the film suggests that Salieri's deeply moving experience with the work is one brought about directly from the musical score. It is as if the Italian composer's mind, seeing the notes on the page, works to generate the music that materializes in the sound track.

Salieri does not give any harmonic analysis nor does he offer any formal diagrams, but nevertheless he provides a close description and interpretation of the music itself. At least broadly, then, we can think of him as participating in the activity that best defines the music theorist: music analysis. As music theorists, we analyze scores as musical texts to better understand their interrelating parts and develop an informed interpretation on how they work. That the score moves Salieri and not the performance of the score may not surprise a music theorist. At the same time, in its portrayal of analysis *Amadeus* poses a particular problem for those interested in analyzing film music. Unlike Salieri, who reads a musical score, the scholar must "read" this moment as part of a filmic text. We do not have Mozart's manuscript. Instead, we have a musical performance of K. 361 as one of many sounds mixed within a sound track. In this context, music operates under a different set of conventions than those of a score. It works

first as a collection of meaningful sounds rather than meaningful written notation. Not only does music in film accompany an image track, but it also appears among, rubs up against, and even mixes with other meaningful sounds on the sound track. In order for scholars to understand how music works in a film they must consider it in a broader context than that currently envisioned by the field of music theory. In other words, the question a film music analyst must ask is not just how does music work in film, but also how does music as a component of meaningful sound work in film?

As a way of exploring this question, we must reinterpret music as a specific, specialized collection of sounds contained within a more generalized field of meaningful sound. From that perspective the gap between musical and sonic meaning diminishes. This dissertation, then, is an attempt to bridge the gap that film music scholarship rooted in the discipline of music theory posits between music and sonic meaning. Instead, I propose a more holistic model of how music, as a component of meaningful sound, works in film. In particular, I will argue that music is best considered a specialized set of a larger universe of sonic figures that I call *acousticons*. Acousticons are those conventionalized figures of music *or* sound (e.g. reverb, echo, high fidelity sound) fashioned to represent aural experiences, and they exist on a continuum defined by the poles of purely musical codes on the one hand and purely sonic codes on the other. In such a model, the distinction between musical and sonic signs overlaps and blurs at their intersection.

The dissertation itself breaks down into four chapters. The first chapter works toward a general theory of the acousticon. It frames acousticons in terms of Charles Sanders Peirce's modes of the sign, linking the acousticon's "sonic" qualities to the indexical mode (related by cause) and its "musical" qualities to the symbolic mode (related arbitrarily), both of which are

mediated by the acousticon's iconic qualities (related by resemblance).[1] In moving towards a definition of the acousticon I consider parallels with the art history field of iconography and Raymond Monelle's conception of the iconic topic. I use sonic representations of the horse gallop as a framework for the chapter, culminating in a case study of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which updates the sound of the cavalry charge with the use of helicopter sounds.

Chapters two and three are both case studies exploring different types of acousticons. Chapter two considers various acousticons that signify the subjective interior. The first part of the chapter considers the musical predecessor, the harmonic region of ♭$\hat{6}$ and its use in signifying monstrous interiors in 1930s horror films. I also consider how new sonic figures accessible through an emerging sound film practice interact with the traditional lowered submediant. Finally, I look at how that subjective space is manifests in representations of gendered headphone sound.

Chapter three concerns how acousticons can evoke different types of nostalgia. I consider two types of acousticons that may work to bring about nostalgia. First, I consider low fidelity as a marker of reverb in the films *Midnight in Paris* (2010) and *The Shining* (1980). Acousticons can also use reverb to evoke nostalgia. Using Svetlana Boym's theories of reconstructive and reflexive nostalgia, I consider how the films *American Graffiti* (1973) and *Dirty Dancing* (1987) use reverb to bring about nostalgia differently. While *American Graffiti* uses 1950s and 1960s recordings as a way of reconstructing the past, placing music diegetically within typical teen

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[1] For a summary of Peirce's modes of the sign, see Paul Cobley and Litza Jansz, *Introducing Semiotics* (Duxford: Icon, 1999).

spaces (i.e. over the radio, in the gymnasium, etc.) of the time, *Dirty Dancing*'s use of temporally marked reverb of the 1960s and the 1980s impresses a more reflexively driven nostalgia.

The final chapter explores acousticons as they appear outside of the sound track medium proper. It considers how acousticonic properties have been adopted and developed in audio branding practices. Audio branding applies to a wide array marketing strategies, but I am particularly concerned with the relation between sound in advertisements and product sound. Audio branding exists as an example of the hyperreal in that advertising sound is presented as highly fabricated precisely to conceal the fact that product sounds themselves are just as constructed. In this chapter, I look at how acousticons accrue connotative meanings both in audiovisual advertisements and in the product's sounds themselves.

ACOUSTICONS IN *AMADEUS*: FIDELITY AND THE INTERIOR

Salieri's analytic moment is also a convenient place to turn to understand the importance of an acousticonic framework. In portraying Salieri's supposed purely mental imagination of this musical text, the sound track presents an actual performance. That is, what sounds is, in fact, an actual chamber orchestra. And to call this a mere performance is a bit disingenuous, given the levels of mediation actually involved in its production. This music is not a live orchestra performing in a concert hall; it is a recording and a recording arranged and conducted specifically for this film. Performers were not the only ones making musical choices; engineers placed microphones and crafted the sound they captured in the booth. Next, sound editors manipulated this initial recording in post-production for the film, where the sound team and filmmakers made decisions in terms of grafting it to the image track and mixing and balancing it with the other layers of the sound track. Finally, after the filmmakers decided how to weigh these

various sonic elements, a set of speakers in a theater or home sound system amplified the final version. This moment of "pure music"—music seemingly generated in the mind of Salieri—is, in fact, a recording of an orchestra sculpted during its production, and then again in the post-production process and mixdown, and then finally amplified through a series of speakers.

Far from being Salieri's direct experience of the score, then, this musical passage is actually highly constructed and part of a many-step process of production. Yet, it is the concealment of that very process that allows the musical passage to give its audience the impression that music is absolute; sound fidelity acts as a sign of Salieri's interiority. Although not written in the score, it is the sound fidelity that stands for the direct and divine perfection of the Serenade. Coupled with the recording's prominent place in the foreground, this fidelity gives the impression that what we hear emanates from the mind of Salieri. More importantly, it is the fidelity that suggests that this internalized music is more direct and divine than that of a diegetic performance of the same piece. Daniel L. K. Chua makes a similar case for the way that the film *Shawshank Redemption* (1994) uses sound fidelity.[2] In one notable scene, the main character Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins), an inmate at Shawshank, uses the prison's intercom system to pipe music from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* throughout the prison. In the context of the film this aria has a magical, divine power to transport "those who are forever 'doing time' out of time," not literally outside the prison but the virtual world of the interior of the self.[3]

There are many implications of this imagined interior space and I will give them due treatment in Chapter 2, but for now I want to focus on this indelible link between the music and

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[2] Daniel K. L. Chua, "Listening to the Self: *The Shawshank Redemption* and the Technology of Music," *19th Century Music* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 341-355.

[3] Ibid., 351. For a similar reading, see Robert Hatten, "Musical Agency as Implied by Gesture and Emotion: Its Consequences for Listeners' Experiencing of Musical Emotion," in *Semiotics 2009: Proceedings of the 34th Annual Meeting of the Semiotic Society of America*, ed. Karen Haworth and Leonard Sbrocchi (New York: Legas Publishing, 2010), 168.

high fidelity sound. Notably, the noisy, distorted sounds of the Shawshank intercom system melt away from the sound track over the course of the scene, revealing a paradoxical directness parallel to that experienced by Salieri. Again, while not part of the score, the fidelity of the sound is precisely what makes the music in this scene work. To ignore that is to miss the point.

> In this film, the message is in the medium...Through 'Mr. Mozart,' Andy, the local hero, speaks globally; he shares his musical iPodic interior by converting the entire prison into a universal iPod: 'we are all born free,' the music proclaims, 'and even if everywhere we are in chains, hope keeps us alive.' In Andy's iPodic being we hear the indomitable spirit of humanity.[4]

The music's *recorded* format affords fidelity more connotative power. Nevertheless, the use of aural fidelity is not a recent development, but has its roots in the long nineteenth century.

In an analysis of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, Chua argues that prior to the invention of sound recording, fidelity was still a concept in relation to the musical score. Nineteenth-century philosophers spoke of the *Werktreue*: "a fidelity to the work—turning the score into a kind of 'true recording' to which musicians had to be faithful: the performers' allegiance to notation guaranteed the high fidelity of the work."[5] This notion of the *Werktreue* appears in another scene in *Amadeus*. Mozart's wife, Constanze (Elizabeth Berridge), brings Salieri some of Mozart's scores to look through. She off-handedly remarks that she has originals. "He never makes copies," she says. Salieri flips through the manuscripts and is flabbergasted when he sees that none of the manuscripts contain any errors. Again, the music materializes in high fidelity and again Salieri refers to Mozart's work as "the very voice of God." Each time he flips a page, a new piece begins, *in medias res*. Passages from the following five works appear: Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major K. 299; Symphony No. 29 in A Major, K.201; Concerto No. 10 for

[4] Chua, "Listening to the Self," 351.
[5] Ibid., 346.

Two Pianos and Orchestra in E-Flat Major, K.365; Symphonie Concertante in E-Flat Major, K.364; and, finally, the Kyrie from the Mass in C minor, K. 427. This time, Salieri draws an explicit connection between notational and aural fidelity: "These were first—and only—drafts of music, but they showed no corrections of any kind. Not one! He had simply written down music already finished in his head. Page after page of it as if he were just taking dictation." For the modern filmgoer, fidelity is likewise converted to the sonic realm, an aural corollary to the fidelity of the *Werketreue*, the perfection of Mozart's musical scores.[6]

In both *Amadeus* and in *The Shawshank Redemption* fidelity, while not properly part of the musical score, nonetheless is the primary element each film uses to construct how the music operates conventionally as part of each respective sound track. Any traditional analysis of these scenes would overlook how fidelity functions as part of the music. Scholars studying film music must therefore shift their perspective on what counts as properly *musical* on the sound track. This does not mean, however, that music analytical methods are unimportant for studying the sound track. Music semiotics, and in particular topic theory, offers a useful frame for approaching acousticonic meaning in the film sound track.

MUSIC SEMIOTICS AND CONVENTIONAL SOUND, OR, WHAT IS A MUSICAL TOPIC?

Topic theory, a specialized area of musical semiotics, is a quickly growing field of music semiotic research devoted to the study of musical topics. Broadly, musical semiotics defines a topic as a musical figure that signifies by virtue of its conventionality. Notably, the topic can signify at various levels, bringing about specific stylistic or genre associations, but also

[6] Mozart predated the concept of the *Werktreue*, but his name was nevertheless invoked by nostalgic critics of the nineteenth-century. In any case, it is fair to assume that this Romantic ideal is in play in the ideological perspective presented in the film.

establishing a general mood. For instance, a music analyst drawing on topic theory would, given other appropriate conditions, construe a fast-paced, repetitive triplet figure, like the piano accompaniment in Schubert's setting of "Der Erlkönig," as signifying a horse at full gallop, while simultaneously inferring a general sense of agitation or anxiety from the topic and its musical backdrop. Musical topics are particularly important to dramatic works, where their communicative efficacy is highly prized, so it is hardly surprising that scholars working on film music have had frequent recourse to their use, whether they come with a formal semiotic methodology, such as Claudia Gorbman's "cultural codes," or with a more informal interpretive framework, finding musical meaning by identifying clichés or moods.[7]

The study of topics usually involves either an extensive empirical survey of a circumscribed musical literature that leads to a list of the conventional features characteristic of a topic or an interpretation of a particular work based on identifying topics and explicating how

[7] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). For other examples of formal and informal topic theory employed in film music analysis, see James Deaville, "The Topos of 'Evil Medieval' in American Horror Film Music," in *Music, Meaning & Media*, eds. Erkki Pekkilä, David Neumeyer, and Richard Littelfield (Helsinki: Semiotic Society of Finland; University of Helsinki, 2006), 26-37; Ruth Doughty, "African American Film Sound: Scoring Blackness," in *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media: A Critical Overview*, eds. Graeme Harper, Ruth Doughty, and Jochen Eisentraut (New York: Continuum, 1998), 325-339; Jane M. Gaines and Neil Lerner, "The Orchestration of Affect: The Motif of Barbarism in Breil's *The Birth of A Nation* Score," in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, eds. Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 252-268; Claudia Gorbman, "Drums Along the L.A. River: Scoring the Indian," in *Westerns: Films Through History*, ed. Janet Walker (New York: Routledge, 2001), 177-195; Peter Hutchings, "Music of the Night: Horror's Soundtracks," in *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media: A Critical Overview*, eds. Graeme Harper, Ruth Doughty, and Jochen Eisentraut (New York: Continuum, 1998), 219-230; Kathryn Kalinak, *How the West Was Sung: Music in the Westerns of John Ford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Andrew P. Killick, "Music as Ethnic Marker in Film: The 'Jewish' Case," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, eds. Pamela R. Wojcik and Arthur Knight (Durham, NC: Duke Univeristy Press, 2001), 185-201; Neil Lerner, "Copland's Music of Wide Open Spaces: Surveying the Pastoral Trope in Hollywood," *The Musical Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 477-515; Ronald W. Rodman, *Tuning In: American Television Narrative Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Linda Schubert, "Plainchant in Motion Pictures: The 'Dies Irae Theme' in Film Scores," *Florilegium* 15 (1998): 207-229; James Wierzbicki, "Weird Vibrations: How the Theremin Gave Musical Voice to Hollywood's Extraterrestrial 'Others,'" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30, no. 3 (April 2010): 125-135. For an overview and critique of the use of topic theory in film music analysis, see James Buhler "Ontological, Formal, and Critical Theories of Film Music and Sound," in *Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 208-219.

they function in the work.[8] Particular topic theorists have therefore focused on identification and classification, interpretation and music analysis, and historical and cultural context.[9] In any case, musical semiotics assumes that topics are meaningful figures in a musical code. Topics, in other words, communicate to properly enculturated listeners, and the usual task topic theory sets for itself is one of decoding, of translating the meaning of those conventional musical figures. Moreover, topic theory is particularly noteworthy for the analytical attention it brings to musical elements that generally fall outside the purview of traditional music theory, aspects such as tempo, dynamics, and voicing.

As an example, we may return to Salieri's reading of Mozart's K. 361, and consider it as a sort of basic topical analysis (See Example 1). Broadly, what he describes is the bringing together, or troping, of two different topics: the pastoral and singing style.[10] His metaphoric invocation of the bassoon and basset horns as a "rusty squeezebox" suggests both a rustic and quaint quality evocative of the pastoral. These are all captured in the major mode, slower tempo, undulating accompaniment pattern, slow harmonic rhythm, and the concertante trading off in the winds. The melody itself, with its large, upward leaps and stepwise fill patterns suggest a singing

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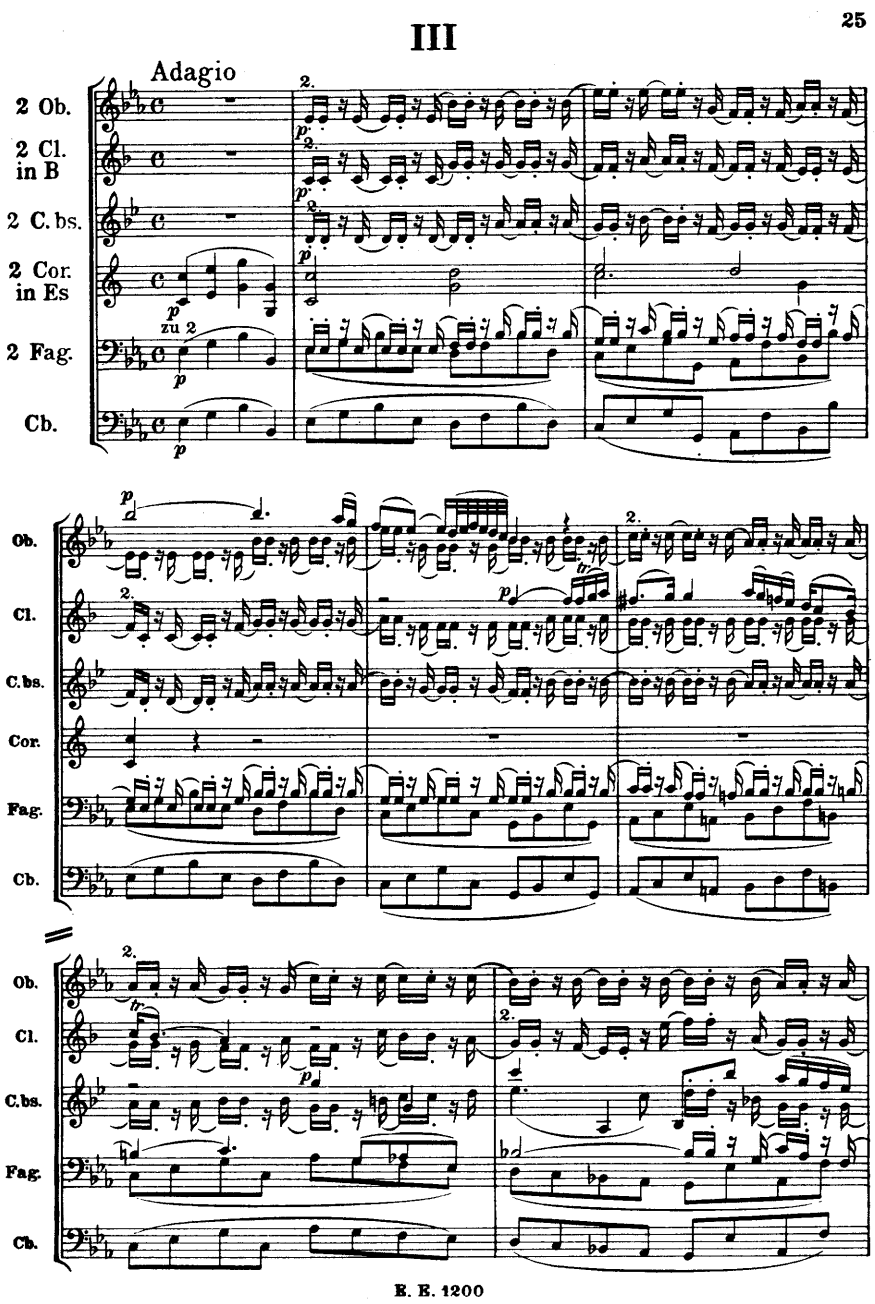
[8] Nicholas Peter McKay, "On Topics Today," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 4 (2007). http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/251.aspx (accessed January 12, 2014): 159-183.

[9] For scholarship that identifies and classifies topics see Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980); Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze De Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Kofi V. Agawu, *Playing With Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). For scholarship that deals with interpretation and music analysis using topics, see Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). For scholarship that deals with cultural and historical contextualization of topics see Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, Pastorale* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[10] For more on troping see Hatten, *Musical Meaning*; *Musical Gestures*); "The Troping of Topics in Mozart's Instrumental Works," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, edited by Danuta Mirka (NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 514-36.

style. Again, Salieri captures the singing aspect in his description of the instruments. The "unwavering" oboe is like an unwavering voice that passes the melody to the sweet, *bel canto* voice of the clarinet. Typically, the bringing together of the singing style and pastoral in 18th-century music often invokes the *middle style*, usually associated with the notion of natural grace.



Example 1: Opening 8 measures Serenade No. 10 for 13 Wind Instruments in B-Flat Major, K. 361, 3rd Movement

One fundamental issue currently within the field of topic theory is the lack of a broadly accepted definition for what constitutes a musical topic, which is a problem the acousticon could help to ameliorate. While there has been an explosion of scholarship engaging in topical analysis—in various taxonomies, interpretative models, and cultural histories, no one, unanimous definition of what exactly constitutes a musical topic currently exists. By understanding the musical topic as a specialized subset of meaningful sound (i.e. a specific type of acousticon) we might be able to better define what and how musical semiosis works by observing where musical signification overlaps or is distinguished from a broader sonic signification.

Originally, musical topics only pertained to the 18th-century characteristic figures explored by Leonard Ratner.

> From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as *topics*—subjects for musical discourse. Topics appear as fully worked-out pieces i.e., *types*, or as figures and progressions within a piece, i.e., *styles*. The distinction between types and styles is flexible; minuets and marches represent complete types of composition, but they also furnish styles for other pieces.[11]

Ratner's reason for exploring these various characteristic figures was fundamentally a historic one. He validates his categories by basing them on philosophical and musical accounts contemporary with 18th-century music. That is, a musical topic for Ratner is a characteristic figure found in music from the Classic period. However, as topic theory has gained traction, scholars have broadened or narrowed the definition according to their own agendas.

[11] Ratner, *Classic Music*, 9.

One of the first music theorists to use musical topics in analysis and interpretation was Kofi Agawu. For Agawu, the musical topic is an expressive musical sign that "consist[s] of a signifier (a certain disposition of musical dimensions) and a signified (a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality)."[12] In other words, topics are culturally-coded, musical signs that usually reference some extramusical sign. For him, Ratner's topical categories are provisional ones that may be expanded for the needs of the interepreter. Kofi Agawu's *Music as Discourse*, for example, provides a list of a whopping sixty-one categories.[13] Moreover, topic theory can be expanded to include music both predating and posthumous to the Classic period, with studies including Romantic and Modern uses of topics. Agawu astutely observes about that "constructing a comparable universe [of topics] for Romantic music would fill more pages than we have at our disposal."[14] Additionally, Agawu recognizes that topics do not just exist in sheet music, but as part of the acoustical realm. "This means, following Barthes, that topics may be read or heard as at least second-order semiotic systems, since they take a musical sign (or set of musical signs), drain it of signification, and then refill it with meaning."[15] In short, Agawu works to expand the realm of musical topics and in doing so he deemphasizes the need for historical grounding of the definition of the musical topic.

If Agawu deemphasizes the importance of the historicity of the definition of the musical topic, then topic theorist Raymond Monelle refutes it entirely. Monelle puts forth an argument against historicizing the musical topic, claiming that, "if theoretical ideas have any real interpretive force, is unlikely that they will have been proclaimed by contemporaries, for

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[12] Agawu, *Playing with Signs*, 49.
[13] Kofi V. Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43-44.
[14] Ibid., 45.
[15] Agawu, *Playing with Signs*, 49.

contemporaries are engaged in the *justification* of their music and thus concealing vital features."[16] For him, then, musical topics need no mention in the discourse of contemporaries in order to authenticate their existence. Musical topics are "culturally enshrined" musical signs. Topics are socio-historical constructions, and he considers the various cultural contexts that led to their conventionalization.[17] In refuting Ratner, he critiques Ratner's historical claims, citing mistranslations and idiosyncratic readings of primary sources on musical figures.[18] The historical sources for the figures that Ratner and others use as a basis for their topics are for Monelle insufficient, since scholars with historical hindsight can uncover conventions hidden from or missed by contemporary writers, but nevertheless evidenced in their works. Various music literatures from the entire span of Western music are littered with musical topics, and he understands it as the topic theorist's job to locate and unpack them.[19] Nevertheless, Monelle's model of the musical topic is limited to the realm of music proper.[20] He does not acknowledge the overlap between musical and sonic signification.

While both Agawu and Monelle aim to expand the definition of the musical topic to incorporate different elements of musical semiosis, other scholars aim to delimit the concept. In her introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, Danuta Mirka argues for a return to Ratner's historical foundations.[21] She points out that 18th-century philosophers and musicians

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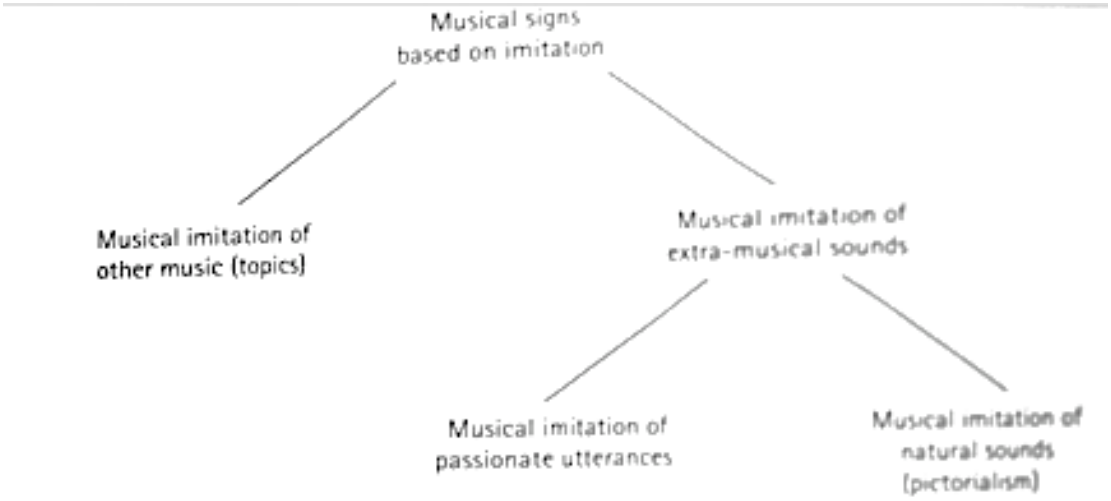
[16] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 24.
[17] Monelle, *The Musical Topic*.
[18] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 24-33.
[19] Ibid., 33.
[20] "Music does not signify society. It does not signify literature. And most of all, it does not signify 'reality'. Musical codes are proper to music, as the other codes proper to their respective spheres," Ibid., 19.
[21] "In this volume we propose that it is useful to distinguish topics from other [musical] conventions in order to see how they interact with each other. Consequently, we return to Ratner's original concept of topics and define them as *musical styles and genres taken out of their proper context and used in another one*. Other conventions, subsumed under this concept by other authors, are not topics…" Danuta Mirka, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. by Danuta Mirka (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

had their own semiotic theories that reflected their approach to interpreting music. Part of the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of musical topic today, she asserts, is that music scholars like Monelle have generally eschewed 18th-century semiotics in favor of modern semiotic theories. What results is a conflict in conception of musical signs between modern scholars and 18th-century scholars. Specifically, she claims that the concept of the musical topic gets conflated with other forms of musical imitation in recent scholarship. Instead, for Mirka, musical topics are examples of 18th-century music that imitates other music. She does, however, acknowledge other types of musical imitation (see Example 2) exist although these should not count as musical topics.



Example 2: Mirka, Classification of musical signs based on imitation, "Introduction" in Oxford Handbook of Musical Topics (2014), 36

CONCLUSION

In summary, there is no clear, widely-accepted definition of what constitutes a musical topic. Some scholars have found Ratner's original definition too constricting, like Agawu and Monelle, while others have worked to justify its historical roots, like Mirka. However, the

limitations put on what a musical topic does not directly impact the concept of the acousticon because regardless how one defines a conventional musical sign it will still fall within the semiotic field of the acousticon. Mirka's classification scheme (Example 2) could be further expanded such that the entire category of "musical signs based on imitation" is subsumed under the heading of "sonic signs based on imitation." In doing so her classifications become muddled. For example, what exactly separates a musical imitation of a natural sound from a sonic imitation of a natural sound (e.g. the sound of coconut shells as a horse gallop)? A broader perspective reveals areas of overlap not visible from within topic theory itself. By acknowledging conventional musical signs as part of a larger body of conventional sonic signs we might be able to get a better grasp on how musical signification parallels and specifically differs from other forms of aural meaning. However, knowledge of acousticonic meaning does more than clarify musical signification; it also opens up aural conventions traditionally left unconsidered. While considerations of reverb, echo, amplification, and sound fidelity may matter less in traditional contexts, the connotative meaning these conventional sounds might have in other mediums like popular music or film often hold crucial meaning inextricable from more traditionally accepted categories of musical elements.

In closing, I would like to return to the opening scene in *Amadeus* and, this time, offer an acousticonic interpretation of the scene to add to the topical analysis of the piece provided above. Leading up to Salieri's inspection of Mozart's manuscript, the ambience of a social crowd in the space of the ballroom may be heard. Children play in the foreground, ladies laugh offscreen, and wooden footsteps sound across the ballroom floor. In the close-up shot of the score, all this sound melts away, much like the feedback on the speakers in Shawshank prison. For a moment the sound track is silent as Salieri inspects the music. The silence works to show that his full

attention (and potentially the audiences) lay on the score before him and not the distracting sounds about the room. Moreover, it offers the sign of clarity, like a blank canvas, on which the performance may unfold. Then Salieri, in voice over, begins to speak. It is as if his voice then cues the music, as the accompaniment pattern opens up in the sound track. Here, the bassoons underscore Salieri's voice, but the volume slowly increases once the oboe enters. Notably, the instruments are recorded at the center of the recording space, helping to suggest that the music comes from Salieri. However, this need not be the case. In other recordings, microphone placement seems to add just as much of a musical effect as anything else. For example, a 1994 recording of the Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras has noticeable differences. In addition to speeding up the tempo and removing legato the accompaniment figure, the Mackerras recording elects to make use of the stereo sound space. The "singing voice" in this recording is passed around by the stereospeakers; the oboe sounds in the left speaker, then the clarinet picks up the melody in the right speaker. Both versions of the *Amadeus* recordings, that in the sound track in the film and the soundtrack album,[22] do not make use of this virtual space of envelopment.

In the film, the use of a central space thus lends itself to producing the effect that the music's source comes from a central location: that of Salieri. There are subtle differences in the sound track and soundtrack versions of the K. 361 as well. The most obvious difference is that Salieri does not speak over the soundtrack version. In the film, there are subtle shifts in volume to bring out the singing melody. Early in the description, the music is much lower than Salieri's voice, helping to substantiate Salieri's claim that it starts as "almost nothing." Anticipating the

[22] In this dissertation, I will use "sound track" to designate the sounds that accompany a film's image track and "soundtrack" to refer to an album released separately that features music from a film.

oboe, however, the music rises in volume ever so slightly, along with the oboe's crescendo into the phrase, asserting itself as just as important, at least for a moment, with Salieri's voice. Salieri's voice, of course, is important in that he gives insight, but nevertheless he pauses, speaking quickly over long notes. Like the small swells in the entrances of each new instrument picking up the melody, Salieri inserts his own voice into the unfolding music. His voice becomes one among the many.

Chapter 1: Toward a Theory of the Acousticon

The acousticon is an aural figure that exists in the gap that film music scholarship posits between music and sonic meaning. Acousticons are conventionalized figures of music or sound, and they exist on a continuum defined by the poles of purely musical codes on the one hand and purely sonic codes on the other. These poles generally correspond to the categories of "realistic" and "fantastic," "objective" and "subjective," and "diegetic" and "nondiegetic," which I will explore in more detail below. In practice, however, no such "purely" musical or sonic sign exists, and the border between the two categories is porous. Instead, the degree of the sound's iconicity—how closely or distantly the sound imitates or resembles its object—connects these two poles, and it is in this shared space where the clear distinction between film music and film sound breaks down. The more iconic, the more a sound resembles its sonic object, while the less iconic, the more symbolic its relation to its object. Since all sound in film is constructed,[1] a theory of the acousticon recognizes the connotative potential any sonic element in a film might carry, but it also recognizes that some sounds may have more acousticonic potential than others.

In what follows, I attempt to further describe the concept of the acousticon. In the first part I consider Charles Sanders Peirce's three modes of the sign in more depth and, using two contrasting examples, I detail the specific relations of these modes in the form of the acousticon. An acousticon has a conventionalized meaning whose signifying potential is inversely related to the degree of its iconicity. I then consider criticism of the application of Peirce's model in media studies, specifically in its usefulness for the cinematic medium. In answer, I suggest that the goal

[1] Michel Chion, "The Real and the Rendered," in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), 95-122.

of acousticonic analysis is not merely to label, but instead to engage in a hermeneutical analysis informed by the sociohistorical context that led to the formation of a given acousticon. Under these analytical conditions I consider how the acousticon relates to the literature of topic theory, a quickly growing field in music theory that specializes in understanding musical convention. Finally, I close the chapter with a brief acousticonic reading of the sound track to *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Specifically, I look at the acousticonic representations of helicopters and how they operate as modifications of the musical warhorse topic to express the film's theme of the irreparable damage the horror of war wreaks on the souls of its participants.

FANTASTIC GALLOPS: REPRESENTING HORSES IN CINEMATIC ORIGIN MYTHS

On a sunny, June day in 1878 a small crowd of spectators gathered around a horse track in Palo Alto, California. Mostly journalists, they came to witness a technological spectacle, Eadweard Muybridge's attempt to capture a horse galloping at full gait in a series of stop-action photographs. The endeavor was over six years in the making. California railroad tycoon Leland Stanford originally approached Muybridge in 1872 with the offer of $2,000, the equivalent of $40,000 by current standards, to prove that, like trains, horses travelled by means of unsupported transit.[2] However, inadequate technology, skepticism surrounding his earlier photographic evidence, and a murder trial plagued Muybridge's project for over five years.[3] Now, armed with an array of twelve state-of-the-art cameras, he would finally accomplish his goal. Setting each

[2] In fact, the theory of unsupported transit had been demonstrated in the work of a French scientist, Étienne-Jules Marey in 1872 who developed a contraption fitted to a horse's hooves to sense whether the animal did, in fact, fully leave the ground. For more see Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), 99.

[3] In 1874, Muybridge murdered his wife's lover in a fit of rage. A trial ensued, but found him not guilty due to supposed mental instability arising from a head injury sustained from a carriage accident from over a decade earlier. Following the trial, Muybridge retired to Central America for some photography work and a self-imposed penance for his crime.

camera twenty-one inches apart he individually fastened them to trip wires that, once breached by the horse, triggered the photographic mechanism. As the animal passed, the cameras took near instantaneous photographs, somewhere between 1/500th to 1/1000th of a second. Developed onsite, the series of twelve photographs left spectators and reporters awestruck as they revealed an uncanny image of the Kentucky thoroughbred frozen, hovering, with its hooves curled beneath its body. The images, as seen in Figure 1.1, created uproar among artists as they called into question the validity of the popular hobbyhorse painting style, shown in Figure 1.2, which portrayed the horse with its legs splayed out rather than tucked under. Some would adapt their painting style to resemble Muybridge's iconic horse photographs.[4] Others would repudiate them, claiming the violence and falsity of photography, which is a sentiment distilled in the words of Auguste Rodin: "it is the artist who is truthful and it is photography which lies, for in reality time does not stop…"[5] Nevertheless, it would take Muybridge less than a year to develop a means of showing the photographs in motion in the form of the zoopraxiscope that would again awe audiences with their ability to inject the frozen stills of the horse with movement. Though Muybridge was able to reanimate his equestrian object, to some viewers the moving image noticeably lacked a certain authenticity with respect to everyday experience: a sonic presence. As a journalist from the *San Francisco Bulletin* recounts, "nothing was wanting…but the clatter of the hoofs from the turf and an occasional breath of steam from its nostrils."[6]

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[4] For a history of the hobbyhorse or Galop Volante style see Irma B Jaffe, "The Flying Gallop: East and West," *Art Bulletin* 65, No. 2 (June 1983): 183-200. For and account of the artistic reaction to Muybridge's photographs see John Ott, "Iron Horses: Leland Stanford, Eadweard Muybridge, and the Industrialized Eye," *Oxford Art Journal* 28, No. 3 (2005), 409-428, esp. 416-428.

[5] Quoted in James E. Paster, "Advertising Immortality by Kodak," *History of Photography* 16, No. 2 (1992), 135-139.

[6] Cited in Ott, "Iron Horses," 412.

Figure 1.1: One of Muybridge's famous photographs (1878)

Figure 1.2: Richard Corbould's The Oatland Stakes at Ascot in June 1791 (1793).

In contrast to this journalist's speculative gallop that would have further legitimized these moving images, a different rendering of the horse gallop on the other side of the Atlantic would help to fictionalize it. Two years prior to Muybridge's famous photographic session, Richard Wagner's epic opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* premiered in its entirety in the Bavarian town of Bayreuth. In an inversion of Muybridge's visually present yet sonically absent image,

Wagner's horse does not appear onstage but instead manifests musically. In spite of, or perhaps as a result of their lack of bodies these musical horses were very much present for their audiences, particularly in "The Ride of the Valkyries." They also possessed a sort of mythical power that at least partly arose from the technological innovations of the Bayueth theater, itself a consequence of a growing listening trend among European middle classes of the time. Over the 17th and early 18th centuries, European concert music became less a site of social networking and more concerned with a direct, individualized connection to the music.[7] The Bayreuth Festspielhaus, an especially designed theater for Wagner's operatic works and a spectacle in its own right, attempted to spatially intensify this experience by obscuring the music's source: the orchestra. Wagner, with the help of German architect Gottfried Semper, constructed an orchestra pit that completely concealed the conductor and musicians from the audience's view.[8] Wagner's reason for this concealment was, in his own words, "[to give] the true impression of dramatic art."[9] Like a sleight of hand, hiding the orchestra boosted the music's perceived directness.[10] The pit, according to Wagner, helped the audience forget that the sound came from a physical source located within the theater. Wagner thought of the orchestra like any other theater technology (i.e. ropes, cords, scaffolds), whose concealment helped one more directly connect with the opera and

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[7] See James H. Johnson, *Listening In Paris: A Cultural History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middeltown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).; and Daniel Chua, "Listening to the Self: *The Shawshank Redemption* and the Technology of Music," 34, No. 3 (2011).

[8] There is much evidence suggesting that Bayreuth was not the first theater to sink their orchestra, although it was the most publicized. See Ned A. Bowman, "Investing a Theatrical Ideal: Wagner's Bayreuth 'Festspielhaus,'" *Educational Theatre Journal* 18, No. 4 (1966): 429-438); Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97-118.

[9] Evan Baker, "Richard Wagner and His Search for the Ideal Theatrical Space," in *Opera in Context: Essays on the Historical Staging From the Late Renaissance to the time of Puccini,* ed. Mark A. Radice (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1998), 254.

[10] See Lydia Goehr, "'*—wie ihn uns Meister Dürer gemalt!*' Contest, Myth, and Prophecy in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Journal of American Musicological Society* 64, No. 1 (Spring 2011): 70.

whose otherwise "constant visibility…" was "an aggressive nuisance," for with "dramatic representation…it is a matter of focusing the eye itself upon a picture; and that can only be done by leading it away from any sight of real objects lying in between, such as the technical apparatus [i.e. the orchestra] for projecting the picture."[11] With its worldly source hidden, music could, like some sort of fantastic vapor, infuse the theater with a sense of the mythic. And even though the musical horse ceased to reside in the tangible world its presence was all the more felt. Semper's decision to situate the pit between the front row of seats and the stage, as seen in Figure 1.3, gave an impression that the music emanated from the depths, from the world of these mythic gods itself. Wagner and Semper referred to this space between proscenium and audience as the "mystic gulf" where music, like the hypnotizing mist of some crystal ball, acted as a conduit from this world to the next.[12] And what better way to project the fantastic horses of gods?

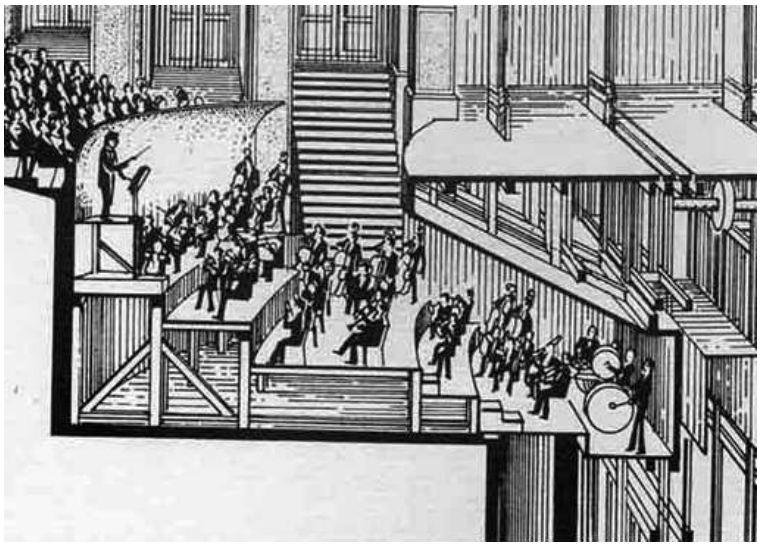

Figure 1.3: A side view of the orchestra pit at the Bayreuth Festpielhaus

[11] Baker, "Theatrical Space," 262.
[12] Ibid., 262.

The Festspielhaus, delayed by Wagner's inability to secure a reliable donor, took five years to construct, and the first brick was laid in 1872—coincidentally, the same year that Stanford approached Muybridge. However, these events have more in common than the coincidence of their occurrence. Both serve as dominant origin myths of cinema and film music. My reason for invoking them here, however, is not in support of locating some ostensible origin of cinema, but instead to highlight the role each narrative plays in shaping, at least in their most common discursive forms, the predominant way of envisaging the sound track.[13] Sound serves as a useful supplement that legitimates the visual image; like objects experienced in everyday life, filmic objects emit sounds when they are set in motion. Yet sound also always has the potential to open a mythic portal through which symbolic power flows; this is most often realized in music, where things typically sensed, felt, or known but not seen traverse into the realm of the heard. If we were, to say, sync the clopping of horse hooves to Muybridge's thoroughbred in motion, the sound presence would serve to reinforce the authenticity of the audio-visual image through a constructed equivalence.[14] Contrarily, underscoring Muybridge's horse with Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," gives a very different effect. This musical horse is culturally encoded with various learned meanings. It is an example of what Raymond Monelle identifies as a horse topic, a type of iconic topic. That is, when anchored to the image of a horse in motion, the

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[13] See Ott, "Iron Horses"; Steve Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image Sound, and Color*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); and Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* for counter narratives on the development of cinema.

[14] By "constructed equivalence," I refer to Fiske and Hartley term from *Reading Television* which acknowledges the metaphorical relation between the signifier and signified. "…*all* signifiers are…metaphorical, to the extent that at the first order of signification they involve a constructed equivalence between the sign and the reality it represents…an apparently direct or iconic representation of reality is more accurately a metaphorical reconstruction of that reality in the terms of the [filmic] medium. The similarity we perceive between signifier and signified should be thought of as a *constructed equivalence*; the metaphoric real world shown on [film] does not *display* the actual real world, but *displaces* it." John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978), 32. For more see pp. 22-40, esp. 31-33

musical horse can awaken a whole universe of affective and social connotations dependent on their symbolic import.[15] In brief, the clatter of hooves grounds the audiovisual image in realism while the musical gallop enchants the audiovisual image, imbuing it with myth.

Sound in film thus operates to support two opposing filmic ideologies. This bifurcation into the realist and the symbolic helps parse out basic functions of the sound track, but it comes at the cost of simplifying a much more complex relation between sound and music. As such, to follow the opposition for music and sound dogmatically quickly generates practical problems for those who study the sound track. For instance, such a distinction becomes murky and its signification certainly deflated from the mythic heights when, say, a pair of coconut shells replace a recording of an actual horse galloping. Or what about a recording of a horse gallop slowed and with heavy reverb as is the case in *Blade Runner: Final Cut* (1982/2006)? The opposite is also true. For instance, what do we make of the actual anvils used in the orchestra pit in Wagner's *Ring* synced with the forging of a sword on stage? In short, the difference in function and meaning in film sound is not as easily drawn as this dichotomy suggests.

These issues constantly arise for film music scholars who attempt to limit their attention absolutely to musical elements of the sound track, since such limits are often ambiguous. It sits in the background, for instance, of the current debate on diegetic and nondiegetic music.[16] Do the characters hear the music that the audience hears or not? What is it that distinguishes nondiegetic

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[15] I will discuss these implications in more detail below, but for more information on the musical horse topic, see Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 45-65.

[16] For more on diegetic and nondiegetic music, see: Robynn Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, edited by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007); Jeff Smith, "Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music *Music and the Moving Image* 2, No. 1 (Spring 2009): 1-25; David Neumeyer, "Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model," in *Music and the Moving Image* 2, No. 1 (Spring 2009), 26-39; Ben Winters, "The Non-diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters* 91, No. 2 (2010): 224-243.

music from diegetic? Does such a distinction accurately portray the way one experiences film? While the distinctions can be useful, it is important that we not get drawn into a dogmatic separation of the two categories. In Daniel Yacavone's words, one might argue that to separate the diegetic and nondiegetic elements of the sound track would "fail to correspond to what may be the actual experience of film, in which diegetic and nondiegetic overlap or fuse into a single experiential gestalt."[17] To echo this sentiment, while the isolation of the music itself might be defensible for studies of music, for those who study the sound track, where musical and sonic signs frequently butt up against one another and even pass into each other's domain, such a divide is impracticable and often undesirable, since it does not represent the actual experience of the sound track. For the music theorist whose discipline is defined by a discourse of *music* analysis, that is, a collection of methodologies developed to explain how musical texts (implicitly those in the western art canon) work, a medium blending so many musical and non-musical elements is even more troubling.[18] The primary issue arises from the fact that the traditional analytical emphasis on the score tends to come at the expense of the indelible link film music forges with the image, not to mention that music is but one of the three traditional components of the sound track. Music theorists studying film music often apply and/or adapt traditional music theory methods for the filmic medium and transcribe music in order to clarify analytical points, but such an approach often results in a translation of music of the sound track

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[17] "Spaces, Gaps, and Levels: From the Diegetic to the Aesthetic in Film Theory," *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image*, 6, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 23. Yacavone is summarizing the position taken in Ben Winters, "The Non-diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters* 91, No. 2 (2010): 224-243.

[18] *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Analysis," by Ian D. Bent and Anthony Pople, *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 13, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com. For examples of music analysis applied to nontraditional domains see: Mark J. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington: Indiana Press University, 2006); Joseph Dubiel, "On Getting Deconstructed," *The Journal of Musicology* 15, 3 (Summer 1997): 308-315; Judith Lochhead, "'How Does It Work?': Challenges to Analytic Explanation," *Music Theory Spectrum* 28, 2 (Fall 2006): 233-254.

into a written score, which is a quite different entity, and the score, once rendered in notation, has a clarity about it that encourages this substitution to displace the actual appearance of the music on the sound track. Too often film music scholarship downplays those forms of sonic convention that do not fit the ostensible criteria of the music itself yet significantly impact musical meaning.[19] By overlooking this aspect of film music as *sound*, the music analyst simply cannot adequately answer the question of how music works on the sound track much less the more general question of how the sound track works.

COCONUT HORSES AND ICONIC COWBOYS

In his article on "Aural Objects," Christian Metz asserts that it is a Western custom to treat sound as subordinate to visual and tactile objects. For when we discuss sound, says Metz, we usually refer to its source rather than the sound itself. Instead this sound is a secondary quality; like color to an object or an adjective to a noun, they are descriptive rather than nominal.

> If I refer to the "buzzing of a machine," my reader doesn't know exactly what I am talking about ("What machine?"). Although my classification for the sound was precise, I was vague concerning its source. It would suffice for me to invert my axis of precision, for me to say "It's the sound of a jet plane," in order for everyone to feel that I expressed myself clearly, and to be satisfied.[20]

Metz's comments here pertain to language, but it nevertheless holds true that when we experience sounds we often think of them as indexical, as *implying* their source rather than being

[19] Peter Doyle's study on the connotative power of echo and reverb in early recordings is a notable exception here. *Echo and Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music, 1900-1960* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2005).
[20] Christian Metz and Georgia Gurrieri, "Aural Objects," *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980): 25-26.

objects in and of themselves.[21] Again, à la Metz, think of how we classify sound as "offscreen." Sound is never actually located on or off the screen, rather it is either heard or it is not heard and the object that is either on or offscreen. The presence of a sound, if its object is not clear from the screen, implies its object offscreen.[22]

Music, especially orchestral music, is an exception in the realm of aural objects. Our primary concern is generally not music's source, that is the instrument(s) making the sound(s), but the metaphorical relationships it forges with extra-musical associations (i.e. emotions, genres, narratives). These associations arise from a process of direct and indirect enculturation, such that music, and more specifically film music, is constituted by what Claudia Gorbman refers to as cultural codes.[23] While musical sound does present a special case, we nevertheless have the propensity to think of even musical sounds on the sound track as *signs* rather than considering them as objects in and of themselves. If we consider all sounds, particularly in film, to have a semiotic element, then one of the important analytical contributions of the acousticon is to delineate which elements of a sound serve to validate a physical object (i.e. a horse), which elements serve to evoke some other learned relation (i.e. heroism), which elements of a sound underscore bodily affect (i.e., the rushing motion), and to what degree to these elements resemble their object. In order to do so we will need to consider the work of semiotician, Charles S. Peirce.

Both media studies and music studies scholars make use of Peirce's work in modern semiotics. Specifically, his three modes of the sign—icon, index, and symbol—have helped scholars to determine the relationship between various representamen and their objects. Iconic

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[21] Of course, a buzz is an object and, as Metz points out, there is no "natural" reason for classifying it otherwise, but because in our culture we favor other senses, sound occupies a sort of quasi-object, quasi-adjective place. See "Aural Objects," 26.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

signs relate to their objects through resemblance, or, likeness, and they will play a primary role in acousticonic relations. The photograph of a car, for example, is iconic as it resembles the appearance of its object. While an icon might have similar or identical features of its object it always lacks or else has an overabundance of its referent's qualities. Otherwise, it ceases to be a sign of that object and becomes instead a replica of it. The photograph of a car lacks the three-dimensional space of the object, the sounds of its motor, the smell of exhaust, and so forth. Indices relate to their objects through causal or physical relationships of contiguity. A set of tire tracks, for instance, has an indexical relationship to a car in that it suggests the prior presence of the vehicle. Symbols relate to their objects through an established rule or convention. The word "car" would be symbolic as its relation to its object, an automobile. Generally, indexical relationships are considered most directly related to their object, followed by icons, and finally symbols. However, in practice these relations are never purely one mode or another, but instead always appear as a mix of indexical, iconic, or symbolic. For example, a photograph of a car is an icon in the sense that the morphology of the image resembles that of a real car, but it is also indexical in the basic sense that light refracted off of an object "caused" the chemical reaction that made the photograph. Indeed, film theory traditionally takes photography to be primarily indexical rather than iconic, which I will explore in more detail later. At the same time a picture of a sports car would have a very different symbolic meaning in terms of class than a clunker would. As Peirce worked through his theory he found more and more often that indexical and iconic signs always also seemed to presume some sort of cultural fluency. That is, through repetition and use the original motivation of the sign would become obscured, and that in order to understand a sign there always seemed to be at least some cultural element at play. In order to gain a better understanding of the relation between icon, index, and symbol, consider the

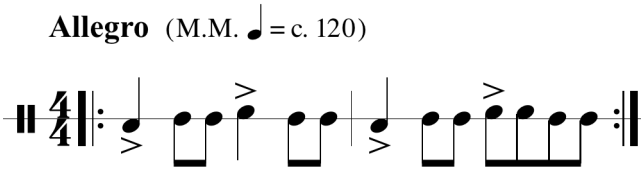
following two cinematic examples: the opening sequence from *High Noon* (1952) and the opening sequence from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975).

High Noon follows Marshal Will Kane (Gary Cooper), who, on the morning of his wedding, discovers that Frank Miller (Ian MacDonald), a man he sent to prison, will be arriving on the noon train to claim revenge. His newlywed, Amy (Gene Kelly), tries to persuade Kane to skip town, but the marshal chooses to stay and face Miller instead of fleeing. The opening of *High Noon* depicts a lone cowboy and his horse in an establishing shot, as seen in Figure 1.4. A horse lazily grazes while a cowboy smokes a cigarette under the shade of a pair of oak trees. The sound track enters a few seconds before this shot with a repetitive rhythmic pattern, Example 1.1, falling in the background. This shot, sound track and all, only lasts a total of seven seconds, but even so the rhythmic pattern's nondiegetic, musical origin is almost immediately clear. There are a few cues that, when considered together, reveal the sound's relation as mostly symbolic. First, the sound does not sync to the horse onscreen. Of course, the sound could sync to some yet unseen, offscreen horse. This, however, is not the case as the sequence develops two other men appear on horses, neither of which sync to the galloping sound. Additionally, the foregroundedness, relative fidelity of the recorded sound, and volume consistency all give the impression that the gallop emanates from a nondiegetic space. Moreover, the gallop is the only sound in the sound track; there are no other synced or ambient sounds at this point. Conventionally, music accompanies opening credits, further suggesting the musical nature of these sounds. Of course once an acoustic guitar and country singer join the rhythmic pattern in the following shot, its function as the opening groove for the film's theme song, "Do Not Forsake Me (Oh My Darling)" becomes apparent. All of this aside, the gallop's status as music is observable in the attributes of the sound itself. While resembling the sound of a horse galloping,

it is also discernibly *not* the sound of a horse galloping. That is, it resembles, iconically, the sound of a horse gallop, but it is not *identical* to the sound of a horse gallop.

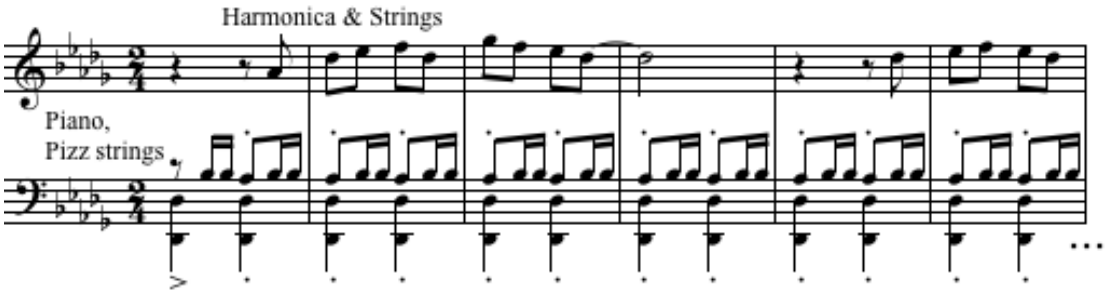
Consider another scene from the film, briefly, as a point for contrast. When Kane first learns that Miller is on the noon train, he does, briefly, decide to flee with Amy, Figure 1.5. As he rides out of town, the sound of two horses pulling Kane and Amy can be heard (0:11:21). Along with its synchronization, the sounds are less hollow, more repetitious, and timbrally more precise than the gallop groove from the opening sequence. Concurrently, an underscored variation of "Do Not Forsake Me," notably featuring an accompaniment pattern of a musical horse in stock "hurry music" fashion (See Example 1.2). This musical horse, though still iconic, is less so than the opening sequence. It is articulated on stringed instruments rather than percussion, which bring different associations; the fact that strings are pitched instruments opens up a whole world of diatonic musical meaning. So what is it that makes the opening sequence *more* iconic than the "hurry music" but *less* iconic than the sounds of the horse carriage?

Figure 1.4: Opening shot of High Noon



Example 1.1

Figure 1.5: Marshall Kane and his wife flee town



Example 1.2: Excerpt from score of the flee scene

In answer to this question, consider the opening gallop in more detail. All three examples have a monotonous rhythmic pattern, though the sound of the wheels of the carriage obscure the final example. Though the opening gallop pattern is repetitive, it consists of two measures, as

shown in Example 1.1. These rhythmic cells oscillate back and forth, unlike the sounds of the horse carriage. The opening gallop percussion is pitched, although more obscurely than the violins in the "hurry music" underscoring. The clear pattern of highs and lows do not resemble the sounds of hooves. What results helps entrain the rhythmic pattern, but it lacks the consistency of pitch and timbre of an actual galloping horse. Nevertheless its iconic properties are perceptible. The percussion used, in terms of timbre, is closer to the actual sounds of a horse gallop than a string section of an orchestra. In short, the gallop is stylized and, as an acousticon, it is closer to the symbolic side of the spectrum than the horse carriage sound, but less so than the "hurry music." But this raises a question: to what do we attribute this quasi-musical quasi-effectual horse? The lyrics to "Do Not Forsake Me" suggest that the song functions to outline the narrative of the film:

The noon day train will bring Frank Miller
If I'm a man I must be brave,
I must face that deadly killer
Or lie a coward (a craven coward),
Or lie a coward in my grave.

Oh to be torn 'twixt love and duty
Supposin' I lose my fair-haired beauty,
Look at that big hand move along
Nearin' High Noon.

...

Do not forsake me oh my darlin'
You made that promise when we wed
Do not forsake me oh my darlin'
Although you're grieving
I can't be leaving,
Until I shoot Frank Miller dead.

As Neil Lerner suggests, the lyrics indicate that the song is told from the perspective of Kane and they uphold his stature as wholesome cowboy, an American hero.[24] Thus, we might interpret the opening rhythmic pattern as the ominous "iron horse" bringing Kane's enemy in at noon, but we might also consider how the same pattern may act to reinforce Kane as heroic cowboy through a long history of associating the horse with prized elements of nobleness, including bravery and a sense of duty.[25] The music, then, invokes these heroic traits, though recasts them through the low form of the cowboy ballad as a way of specifying the hero-type, and all of this before Kane even appears on screen. Additionally, through a leitmotivic process it further reinforces those values through underscoring with fragments of the theme throughout the rest of the film.

The horse gallop as sign of the heroic is a modification of what Monelle calls the *noble horse* topic, which I will return to later in this chapter. At its most general level, it exemplifies Peirce's third mode of the sign, the symbol, in that its associations are learned. However, this relationship is further motivated by contiguity or metonymy, more loosely an indexical feature, in the sense that the sound of the horse is associated with the qualities of its (noble) rider. There is a long tradition of valuing certain horse breeds in Western culture as signs of virility and power. The sound still has iconic attributes, however; it still resembles the sound of a galloping horse, though as I discussed above those attributes are diminished: the stylization of the sound makes its metaphorical associations more apparent. Though the iconic and symbolic features seem more prevalent, the sound, as a gallop, still indexically signifies its object: the horse. Or, as was the case with the Wagnerian orchestra, the source of this music is hidden from us, but its source is an orchestra nonetheless. The gallop here can also be read as indexical to a percussion

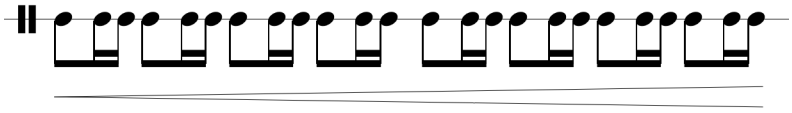
[24] Neil Lerner, "'Look at That Big Hand Move Along': Clocks, Containment, and Music in *High Noon*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, No. 1 (2005): 151-173.
[25] For this historical precedent, see Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 45-65.

section in a country band. Of course the specific type of percussion may elude us, but that does not undermine the indexical feature of the sign. Another layer of indexicality, albeit governed by the symbolic order, is the horse gallop as nondiegetic rather than diegetic sound. Here, an imagined location of the source, decipherable through its acoustical profile of high fidelity, foregrounded sound, allows us to understand its presence that otherwise might be nonsensical. Moreover, that this "horse" is disembodied gives it a sense of the mythic. Thus, the opening of *High Noon* is an example of how a nondiegetic score might use an acousticon to both suggest the presence of a horse and to suggest connotative meanings arising out of its stylization.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) presents a similarly ambiguous example of the gallop, though in a different way. Following a title card establishing the setting of the film, England 932 A.D., the opening sequence of *Holy Grail* reveals its absurd premise in the first image of its hero, King Arthur (Graham Chapman). The scene opens on a misty hill, the dynamic wisps of fog contrasting an unremarkable landscape. While music, in the style one would imagine accompanying a royal procession, sounds underneath the title card, no music accompanies the shot of the hill. A blustery wind is the only audible noise until the faintest sound of a galloping horse distinguishes itself, as shown in Example 1.3. Two observations can be made from the sound in relation to the visual image. First, the sound grows gradually louder, implying the horse is moving nearer. Second, as the sound crescendos a second metallic sound of metal on metal, like the sound of chainmail, sounds in rhythm with the horse hooves. The crescendo of this sound acts indexically, in that its gradual increase implies an approaching object while the metal-on-metal clanging, along with the horse-hoof pattern, draws on a cultural knowledge, here delimited by the context of the film, that what approaches is a knight on horseback. Of course, the gag is that there is no horse, but instead only King Arthur, as seen in

Figure 1.6, prancing in time to a set of coconut shells banged together by a servant following closely in tow and whose main title might as well be “ye royal Foley artist.”

Figure 1.6: King Arthur accompanied with coconuts



Example 1.3: Holy Grail Rhythm

The film reveals an absurdity on two levels. First, that two coconut shell halves banged together is a reliable representation of a galloping horse and second that, as in the *High Noon* example, the mere sound of a horse can function as a symbolic sign of ennoblement. While the galloping horse suggests that a knight will ride over the hillside, the image track undermines this expectation revealing a king travelling on foot like a peasant. Substituting coconuts for horse hooves itself is quite old-fashioned and dates back at least as early sound effects for silents in

film theaters of the early twentieth century, and probably 19th-century theater works as well.[26] The golden age of radio conventionalized and disseminated the effect, which became so predictable that early radio shows pulled stunts similar to that of Monty Python.[27] The practice of displacing "real" sounds with iconic effects, colloquially referred to as "the coconut effect," is very prominent in radio works.[28] Coconuts stand as just one of several examples of many sounds that, despite their recognizable artificiality, come to sound more "real" than the sounds they were fashioned to resemble. One way of explaining "the coconut effect" is that radio lacks a visual corollary, and thus radio artists must find sonic ways to make up for this lack. A seagull, for instance, stands for more than just a bird, but instead works as an synecdoche of the sea.[29] Or, more than this, it could also stand for the various cultural values that one associates with the seashore.[30] In order to do so, it relies on that very artificiality in order to get its point across:

> Their lack of realism may not matter semiotically because we all know that on the radio coconut shells stand for 'galloping horse,' but also that seagull stands for more than 'seagull', just as we probably know that thunder we hear in the theatre will be made by someone standing in the wings manipulating a thin sheet of metal, but also that thunder is an omen. Similarly, the sound of a noisily creaking door is not made by opening a conveniently rusty-hinged door, but by artificial means. It is the artificially isolated element of sound-production that is important. The sign for such a, usually slowly opening, door signifies either – depending on perspective – threat from an entering stranger or someone cautiously venturing into a hostile closed space. The doors in most people's houses do not creak like this (yet one oils doors in radio plays at one's peril). Rather than being a crude indexical sign of the fact that the owner has not oiled the hinges for a long time, a creaking door in a radio play dramatizes the context in which the door is being opened. For similar indexical reasons, people in radio plays eat and drink

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[26] Stephen Bottomore, "An International Survey of Sound Effects in Early Cinema," *Film History*, 11, no. 4 (1999): 485-498.
[27] John J. White, "Coconut Shells and Creaking Doors: A Semiotic Approach to the Avant-Garde Radio Playsound-Effects," in *Outside-in; Inside-out: Iconicity in Language and Literature*, 4 (2005): 154.
[28] Other sound effects include creaking doors, typewriter sounds for news reports, and the explosiveness of onscreen punches in film.
[29] Tim Crook, *Radio Drama: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
[30] John Drakakis, "Introduction" in *British Radio Drama*, ed. John Drakakis (London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29-30.

> noisily, habitually refer to their interlocutors by their names, all have distinct easily recognizable and distinguishable speech traits and wear shoes and conveniently walk on surfaces which make their footsteps audible, when required, rather than padding in slippers across plush carpets. Without such acoustic assistance, listeners might be confused, whereas with it they receive far more than the basic iconico-indexical information about what is going on.[31]

Paradoxically, the artificiality itself is paramount in order for the acoustic icon to "naturally" convey its meaning, that is, both evoking its literal object and its symbolic meaning that a listener can read to help them follow and interpret elements of the radio play.

Films like *Holy Grail* that use conventionalized sounds have an advantage over radio in having visual images to delimit meaning. Nonetheless, sound in film is often a significant source for auxiliary meaning. Whereas any recording of a horse gallop has potential for stylization, one that is noticeably acousticonic calls special attention to its constructedness, or rather its means to infuse the image with what Michel Chion calls "added value."[32] Thus, the more stylized the sound, the more added value it accumulates. A dream sequence from *Braveheart* serves as an apt example. A civil servant, Mornay (Alun Armstrong), has just betrayed William Wallace (Mel Gibson), who now seeks lethal justice upon all who abandoned him during a battle with the English. Mornay has a violent dream and in it, Wallace, in war paint with a fire blazing behind him, rides towards the frame with a long, dark stare. The sequence unfolds in slow motion and oscillates between the shot of Wallace and its reverse, Mornay writhing in his sleep. The horse never fits entirely in the frame, as Wallace moves ever closer. In the sound track a Scottish dirge accompanied by sporadic percussion sounds along with the crackle of flames. These sounds exist as mere background in contrast to the ominous fall of hooves on sod. These foot, or hoof-falls

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[31] White, "Coconut Shells," 155.

[32] "The expressive and/or informative value with which a sound enriches a given image, so as to create the definite impression (either immediate or remembered) that this meaning emanates 'naturally' from the image itself." Chion, *Audio-vision,* 221. For more, see Chapter 1, p. 3-24, esp. 4-5.

are heavier than normal and their tempo adds a dramatic sense of urgency to the shot. Eventually, a loud metallic clank connects the ominousness of the hooves to the violence of war. The sound thus expresses Mornay's terror, but at the same time communicates, through the channel of "warhorse," the latent brutality of the image. Similar horse hooves accompany Rick Deckard's (Harrison Ford) daydream about a unicorn in *Blade Runner: Final Cut*. The gallop placement is much more ambiguous than in the other examples, arising out of a profusion of electronic, quasi-musical sounds. Whether it starts as ambiance in Deckard's urban apartment in the shot before the daydream or as part of the nondiegetic score, it syncs to the breaths and hooves of the unicorn in his dream. In a way, its classification as music here, sound effect there, does not really matter as much as it seems to possess qualities of both. More importantly, its classification does not really affect its added value, a value that overlaps with the examples in *Braveheart*, *Holy Grail*, and *High Noon*.

In short, there are many contexts and ways in which filmmakers employ sonic horses, and for many different reasons. Some of them might be purely fantastic horses, only appearing in nondiegetic scoring; others might be actual horse gallop sounds synchronized with the image of a horse on screen, and still others might function somewhere in between. Perhaps they are part of a nondiegetic country-western song, or perhaps they are synced with a moving image of a horse. Or, perhaps, as in the case of *Blade Runner*, they partake in a little of both. Or, the sound serves as an index to the horse, but later appears to come from a pair of coconuts instead of an actual horse. In each case, the degree of iconicity varies. The more the sound resembles its aural counterpart, the more iconic it is. The less the sound resembles its aural counterpart, the more room for hermeneutic interpretation. Peirce's modes of the sign thus prove useful in making

sense and relating a vast array of sounds, whether deemed effect or music, by considering their iconic, indexical, and symbolic motivations.

In media studies, Peirce's semiotic model has proven useful for some scholars wanting to develop an understanding of a "language of cinema." For Peter Wollen, Peirce's theory of icon, index, and symbol helped decipher the nature of the photographic image as being a "more realistic" sign than, say, a painting. He applied Peirce's modes of the sign to Bazin's theory of photographic realism, considering the photograph as primarily indexical. This more direct mode, argues Wollen, supports the "realistic" nature of film referred to in Bazin.[33] Wollen's work proved highly influential and sparked a new branch of semiotic interest in film studies. However, in more recent years Wollen's use of Peirce's modes has come into question, particularly the claim that the relation between photographic image and its object is indexical rather than iconic. Conversely, some scholars see the emergence of digital filmmaking as shifting the ontological nature of film away from index and toward the icon.[34]

There are two chief arguments against using Peirce's modes of the sign when considering film semiotics. First, scholars frequently misapply or overgeneralize these modes, which may conceal a much more nuanced and complex semiotic relation at work in a given film.[35] This argument stems from a reconsideration of Bazin's work, particularly "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." Daniel Morgan asserts that scholars misapply the "indexical argument" to

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[33] Peter Wollen, "The Semiology of Cinema," in *Signs and Meaning in Cinema*, 5th Edition, (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2013), 116-154.

[34] Rick Altman, "Introduction: Four and a Half Film Fallacies," *Sound Theory/Sound Practice,* ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1997), 35-45; James Buhler and Alex Newton, "Outside the Law of Action: Music and Sound in the *Bourne* Trilogy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*, ed. Carol Vernalis, Amy Herzog, and John Richardson (NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 325-349.

[35] See Tom Gunning, "Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality," *differences* 18, No. 1 (2007): 19-52, idem., "What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, eds. Karen R. Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 39-49; Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, No. 3 (2006): 443-481; Joel Snyder and Joe W. Allen, "Photography, Vision, and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 2, No. 1 (1975): 143-169.

Bazin.[36] More specifically, Morgan argues that (beginning with the work of Peter Wollen) Bazin's concept of photographic realism is attributed to Peirce's indexical mode, thereby oversimplifying and misconstruing Bazin's main argument for the ontology of film.[37] Gunning goes even further and questions the usefulness of Peircean distinctions in understanding how film works in the first place.[38] Second, Gunning argues that trying to use Peirce's categories as he intended results in a highly idiosyncratic, overly-complicated, and close to meaningless semiotic analysis. In Peirce's work, the three modes of the signs are actually a part of a much more complex network of sixty-six relations of the sign, with thousands of possible combinations. Such a large and complicated model is not practical. On the one hand, scholars use Peirce's model too generally, resulting in oversimplified labels while on the other, to use the system that Peirce developed would be indecipherable and approaching meaningless observation.[39]

In developing a theory of the acousticon, it is worth keeping these critiques in mind. The point of the acousticon should not be to merely label the indexical, iconic, or symbolic functions of a sonic sign. However, the use of the Peircean modes can still prove useful if, after identifying a sound as acousticonic, we can then begin to consider these relationships with the intention of interpreting what that sound might mean. In other words, the labels are a starting point for an interpretation. In a recent article, Alexander Robins reexamines Peirce and the indexical relation

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[36] "On the standard reading, photographs are primarily regarded as indexical signs; light reflects off an object and causes the photographic plate to react. A photograph's iconic properties are a function of its indexical status." See Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin," 446-47.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Gunning, "Moving Away from the Index," and "What's the Point of an Index?"
[39] James Elkins, "What Does Peirce's Sign Theory Have to Say to Art History?," *Culture, Theory, and Critique* 44, No. 1 (2003): 5-22.

to the photograph.[40] He, too, suggests that there is often a misapplication of Peirce's modes, especially the indexical. "For Peirce the index points to a physical process that led to its creation but tells us only minimally about the physical process. It tells us about presence without appearance."[41] An index merely suggests the presence of an object even in its absence; it points to some past or present contiguity, or indicates relations of causality. Yet all too often scholars endow the indexical relation with overly generous meanings. For example, in *Holy Grail* the coconuts initially index an object approaching. That object could be a horse, a pair of coconuts, or any number of other objects, dependent upon the audience's interpretation. It is the iconic relation, the sound resembles that of a galloping horse, and the symbolic relation, the possibility of a noble horse, that narrow the meaning. "What is indexical about a photograph or an artwork [or a sound effect] is only its connection to physical processes…To evaluate the meaning of such a sign or a work of art requires the intervention of iconic and conventional meaning as well."[42] In other words, to identify an indexical relationship does not typically give way to a sign's full meaning. For that, we need to consider its symbolic or iconic aspects. Keeping this in mind, I would now like to return to consideration of the musical topic outlined in the introduction.

MUSICAL TOPICS AND ICONOGRAPHY

The word topic originates from the Greek word *topos*, literally meaning "place." As a concept, *topos* originates from Aristotle; Greek philosopher appropriated the term to describe, "a

[40] Alexander Robins, "Peirce and Photography: Art, Semiotics, and Science," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28, No. 1 (2014): 1-16.
[41] Ibid., 11.
[42] Ibid.

general argumentative form or pattern…from which several arguments can be derived."[43] Rhetoricians could employ certain *topoi*, depending on the form and content of their deductive arguments. The better the *topos* fit, the more persuasive the argument. Aristotle's theory of topos, however, was a theory of speaking (or writing) persuasively, and it was not until the 16th century that western scholars connected rhetoric to music. The first noted example appeared in the 1537 text *Musica* (composed music) authored by Nicolaus Listenius. More studies devoted to musical rhetoric arose in 17th and 18th centuries including Joachim Burmeister (*Musica Poetica*, 1606), Christoph Bernhard (*Tractatus* ca 1660), and Johann Mattheson to name a few. These authors concerned themselves with cataloguing what they termed musical figures, or stock motifs that connected specific musical gestures with specific linguistic meanings. They would devote volumes to cataloging these meanings. However, identifying and listing musical figures fell out of favor in the 19th century, although composers still used these figures in both traditional and new capacities. While not being completely effaced, musical figures did not enjoy a full revival until fairly recently, with the publication of Leonard Ratner's *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* and the introduction of modern topic theory.

In his article, "On Topics Today," Nicholas McKay divides modern topic theorists into two generations.[44] The first generation consists of Ratner, Wye Jamison Allanbrook, and Kofi Agawu. Wye Allanbrook considers topics in her book *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, which expands on Ratner's descriptions of dance types, especially in terms of meter and hypermetric hierarchy, in order to account for the rhythmic topoi in the operatic works *Le nozze di Figaro* and

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[43] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* s.v. "Aristotle's Rhetoric," by Christof Rapp, accessed September 12, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/#Topoi

[44]Nicholas Peter McKay, "On Topics Today," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 4 (2007), http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/251.aspx (accessed January 12, 2014): 159-183.

Don Giovanni.[45] Kofi Agawu's *Playing With Signs* (1991) attempts to reconcile Ratner's topics with formal analysis. His objective is to show how music "means" through the inter-"play" between surface-level topical reference and deeper-level harmonic and formal structure. The problem with Agawu's approach is that for music from the Classic period to make syntactical sense, it must unfold in a conventionally ordered way, whereas the same is not true for topics. While there are exceptions to this rule, breaks in musical syntax are abnormalities whose rhetorical effects can be compared to some sort of normative process.[46] No such conventional ordering exists for topics. Even for topics that tend towards certain formal regions (e.g., *Sturm und Drang* as featured in the development of a sonata), their appearance in a given region is not exclusive enough to mark them as a formal neccessity. As William Caplin puts it:

> if we can identify that a given topic is displaced from its conventional formal position, yet the topic also displays musical characteristics that are suitable for the form position it occupies, there is little reason to believe that the composer is toying with our expectations on the relation of topic to form, even if that relation is not as typical as some other one.[47]

This is not to deny that topics and formal units do not interact, but rather to show that those interactions are not strictly syntactical.

The main issue with the musical topic as pursued in the first generation is that their work generally consists of labeling and identifying. Just as labeling a sign as indexical, iconic, or symbolic does little in the way of interpretation and significance, the same can be true for labeling musical topics. It is the desire for a more applicable and deeper understanding of topics

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[45] Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[46] I mean rhetorical here in the sense of Robert Hatten's "rhetorical gesture," involving the interruption of the unmarked flow, in *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 164-176.
[47] William Caplin, "On the Relation of Musical *Topoi* to Formal Function," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, No. 1 (2005):121.

that drive the work of the second generation, Robert Hatten and Raymond Monelle. While having individual in their approach, both scholars identify a lack of rigorous application of the topic in the works of Ratner, Allanbrook, and Agawu. Specifically, topics are reduced to a "universe," where labeling the topic suffices as analysis. But identifying the topic and understanding what the topic conveys, both in relation to other topics and musical features in the work as well as in terms of its cultural significance, are not the same thing. In his first book, Hatten acknowledges the topic in terms of what he calls an expressive genre, a sort of larger organizing device that suggests the expressive trajectory of a movement or work (e.g. tragic-to-triumphant) he considers in Beethoven's oeuvre. He thus actively engages in the interpretation of those topics in relation to each other and various other (some structural, some not) elements that make up a specific piece of music, in order to gain a more profound understanding of expressive meaning.[48] His later book, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, pushes the concept of expressive meaning even further by investigating how topics, styles, and tropes—the combination of two conventional topics to create new meaning—interact and broadly help make musical gestures manifest. Here, Hatten demonstrates how one can interpret the various gestural interactions, of which topics are only one element, of a piece in order to gain a deeper understanding of what and how individual works express. Moreover, Hatten expands his research to include not only the works of Beethoven, but also those of Mozart and Schubert. While Ratner, Allanbrook, and Agawu focused their attentions

[48] Hatten, *Music and Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

specifically on the Classical Era, Hatten shows how these topics continue to make sense in similar or varied ways in the early 19th century.[49]

While Hatten focuses on expressively interpreting how topics and gestures mean in order to interpret individual pieces, Raymond Monelle unpacks topics in their cultural historical contexts. He also uses Peirce's modes of the sign as a basis for his topical model. These topics may be identified by contemporaries or not; their signification hinges upon their ability to signify "through the indexicality of its content, rather than the content itself."[50] As an example, he considers the musical representation of the horse gallop as an iconic topic. An iconic topic, as Monelle defines it, resembles its object and then indexically relates to its signification. That is, iconic musical topics use a chain of modes: they feature a musical sound imitating another *non*musical sound, its object, that in turn indexically relates to a signification, as seen in Figure 1.7. For Monelle, a horse topic signifies through a conventional rhythmic figure that resembles the sound of a horse gallop. The object, in turn, "*inevitably signifies*" heroism or ennoblement.[51] In his third chapter, Monelle aims to do just that by using Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" as his exemplar of the horse topic. The theme, shown in Example 1.4, mimics a horse's gallop through a quick tempo and a dotted note figure. After summarizing a series of reviews from the 19th and 20th centuries of Wagner's *Ring*, he considers the history of the horse in European culture, or, more accurately, the many different types of horses. Monelle concludes that Wagner's "Valkyries" are emblematic of the European warhorse, or *destrier*, which was the supreme weapon from at least as early as the medieval period and up through the 19th century.

[49] Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures*.
[50] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 18.
[51] Ibid.

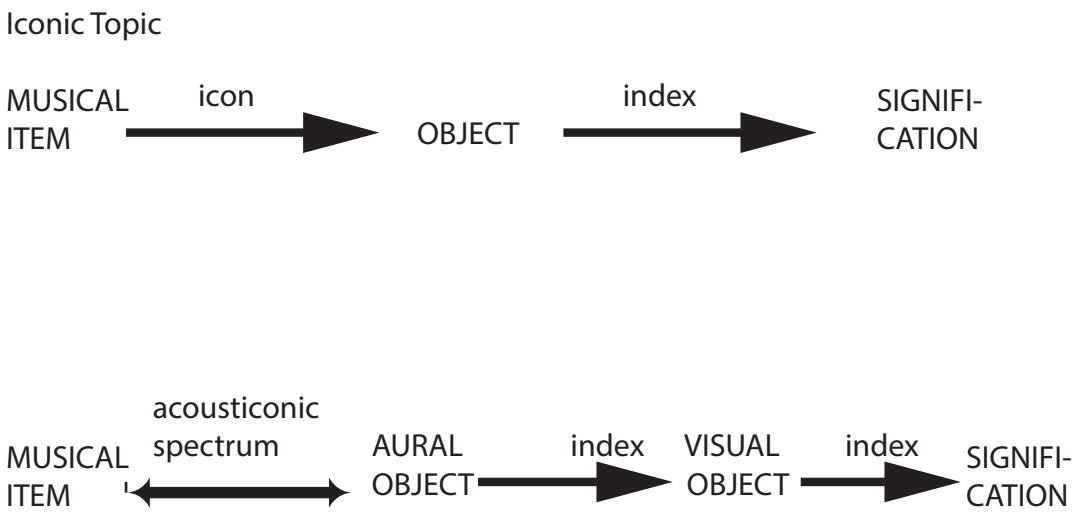
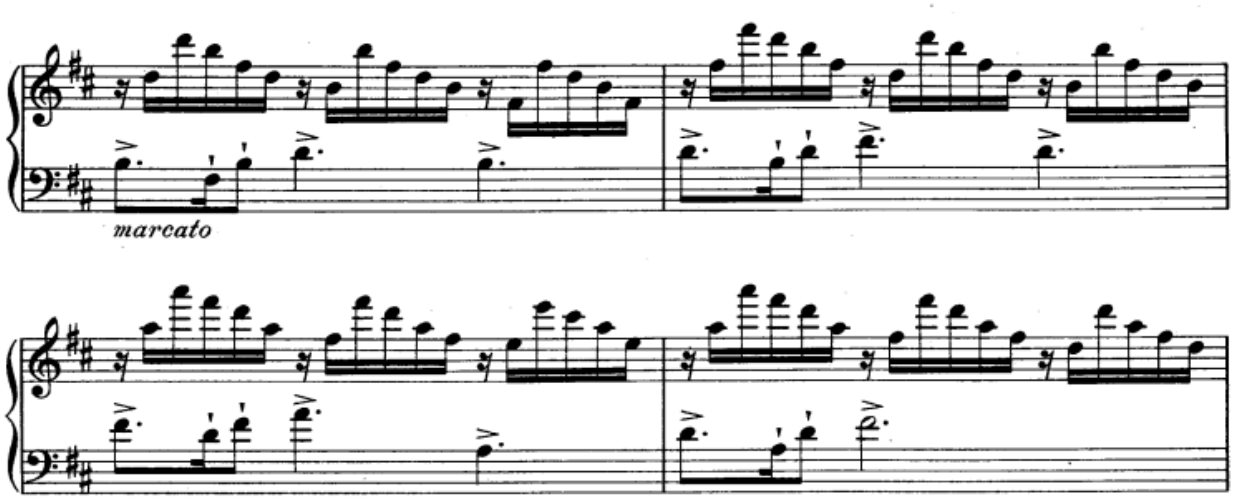


Figure 1.7: Monelle's Iconic Topic adapted to reflect the acousticonic spectrum



Example 1.4: "Ride of the Valkyrie's" Theme

However, Monelle's description of the warhorse as iconic topic is fairly restrictive. First, any examples that deviate from the rhythmic patterns he suggests cease to be examples of the

horse topic, though it is not quite clear how much or how little deviation places a particular musical gesture outside the topic.[52] Those gestures that deviate too much would exist as new iconic signs rather than conventionally symbolic ones. Iconic musical horses would include slower tempo horses, or what he notes as "ambling" horses. A difference in signification is necessary because, historically during the medieval period and up through the 19th century the elite, well-bred horses were reserved for higher class noblemen, particularly as warhorses, while slower, less desirable breeds were relegated to women and peasants. Again, the breed of horse became metonymic for their riders. These ambling horses, or palfreys and rounceys, could not serve as noble steeds and, thus, are not included within the noble horse topic. Finally, he limits the noble horse topic as a Romantic manifestation, appearing from the 1800s until, rarely, the early 20th century.[53]

In addition to this overly-restrictive categorization of the horse topic, his definition of iconic topic misses a critical layer in his semiotic link. He recognizes the iconic relation between a musical imitation of a sound and the indexical relation between an object and its signification. However, there is yet another layer between the sound and *its* object. Thus, a musical imitation of a galloping horse is iconically related to the actual sound of a galloping horse, which is itself indexically related to an actual galloping horse, which then, in the right context, is indexically related to cultural values of nobility and war (see Figure 1.7 above). Within this spectrum sounds are more or less iconic of their aural objects. It is here that we find an overlap between musical and sonic icons. For Monelle, "musical codes are proper to music, as the other codes are proper

[52] Many of Monelle's reasons for including or excluding certain musical horses as topics or as musical icons are qualitative (they're too slow or too rhythmically evasive). Indeed, sometimes one of the types appears in a context where it should not be read as a horse topic. It seems that in order to counteract these unclear boundaries he encourages the reader to approach examples cautiously and use contextual clues.
[53] Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 41-80.

to their respective fields." What I am suggesting is that music codes are enveloped in a larger system of sonic codes, and that the acousticonic realm of conventionally meaningful sound encloses that of the conventionally meaningful musical topic. While enforcing a partition between the two realms might, for the most part, hold true for Western art music from the 18th and 19th centuries, sound tracks contain both music and sound, and where one ends and the other begins is not always so easy to define. In the context of the sound track, music can function as sound effect, and sound effect can function as music.[54]

This separation, however, raises another issue: the unnecessary limitation of the horse topic to European music of the 19th century. Horses were fixtures in the everyday lives for many different cultures in many different time periods up through the first third of the 20th century. The horse in America has an especially rich history. Not only did it inherit the European frame of reference,[55] but it also developed new associations, both from the expansion to the West and from the adoption of the horse in Native American communities.[56] And, though Monelle seems eager to suggest various examples of noble horse sub-topics, he still limits them to art music and a curiously restricted time period. The horse topic did not disappear with the start of the 20th century, but instead remains in vestigial form. Just like locomotive routes and, later, the national interstate highway systems emerged out of pre-existing carriage trails, the musical imitations of these machines have their roots in the broad musical topic of the musical horse. Moreover, the

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[54] Many of the horse examples already discussed would serve as "musical" sound effects. Though more rare, sound effects *can also imitate music*. See, for example Chion's analysis of the nocturnal insects in Randa Haine's *Children of a Lesser God* that imitate the tremolo common in dramatic orchestral music. *Audio-vision*, 20-21.

[55] T. H. Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Genrtry of Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34, No. 2 (1977): 239-257; Clay McShane, "Gelded Age Boston," *The New England Quarterly* 74, No. 2 (2001): 274-302; Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, "The Centrality of the Horse in the Nineteenth-Century American City," in *The Making of Urban America*, ed. Barbara Habenstreit, (NY: Messner, 1970), 105-131.

[56] Robert W. Howard, *The Horse in America,* (Chicago: Follett, 1965).

Romantic music tradition continued in the emerging art of cinema, where compilers of cue sheets pilfered extensively from the 19th-century symphonic and operatic repertories.[57] Nevertheless, Monelle's concept of the iconic topic offers a way of conceiving the relation of iconic properties to the symbolic, and it shows in a convincing manner how certain musical sounds can accrue determinate extra-musical meaning.

In summary, the concept of the acousticon offers a broad way of considering conventional figures of both music and sound. This approach is particularly useful for a medium like the sound track, where a figure functions in both realms. It recognizes that the signifying properties of a sound have some degree of indexical and symbolic motivations, as mediated by the sound's iconic properties. However, it is not enough, nor is it the point merely to label and identify the signifying elements of an acousticon. Instead, an acousticonic interpretation can be furthered in two ways. First, the acousticon must be understood in some cultural historical context, thereby effectively answering how the sound came to be a convention. Second, the acousticon must be understood in relation to the other parts of its filmic context. That is, how does this acousticon conventionally mean, and how does that meaning inform the reading of a specific film or moment in a film. In this respect, the study of the acousticon is analogous with an art historian's study of iconography.

Iconography has a long history in Western art, dating back at least as far back as Giogrio Vasari's, *Ragionamenti*, published post-mortem in 1588. Iconography in the traditional sense refers to visual images that stood in, or signified more complex ideas through conventional associations. In later periods, iconography became more and more complicated, to the point

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[57] "In desperation we turned to crime. We began to dismember the great masters. We began to murder the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Grieg, J.S. Bach, Verdi, Bizet, Tchaikovsky and Wagner—everything that wasn't protected by copyright from our pilfering." Max Winkler in, "Max Winkler: 'The Origin of Film Music' (1951)," *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, ed. Mervin Cook, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

where a single image could tell a story through allegory, for viewers versed in its semiotic system. We might think of a piece of absolute music as working in a similar fashion. Moreover, a vast collection of icons have been more or less successfully collected and catalogued using an alphabetic-numeric system referred to as iconclasses.[58]

Art historians widely consider Erwin Panofsky the originator of modern iconography. Panofsky defines iconography as "a branch of art history interested in the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form."[59] Thus, like topic theory, iconography primarily concerns itself with the semantics and/or semiotics of conventional figures. Panofsky, too, was interested in what an icon is, how it comes to mean, and why it means what it means. His system breaks the of meaning of the image into three stages, the *pre-iconographical*, the *iconographical*, and the *iconological*. The pre-iconographical level considers the "factual" and "expressional" meaning. That is, the pre-iconographical level of meaning is our basic, human ability to identify images at their most basic experiential level. Consider the famous painting *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci in Figure 1.8. The pre-iconographical level would be our recognition of men crowding around a table. The pre-iconographical assumes that viewers have in their own experience seen men, and a table before and that those things are identifiable in a picture. However, identifying these icons would be like stopping at labeling the opening sound in *High Noon* as an iconic gallop indexically signifying "horse" without considering it alongside the other sounds in the sound track, like the acoustic guitar and the image track. In order to understand this painting as representing the Christian figures of Jesus and his disciples, we must

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[58] Iconclasses were a classificatory system designed by Henri van de Waal in seventeen volumes over more than a decade (1973-1985). For more on iconclasses see *Grove Art Online* s.v., "Iconography and Iconology," by Willem F. Lash, www.oxfordartonline.com accessed April 10, 2014.

[59] Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 3.

invoke the iconographical level of meaning: we must "not only be familiar with the practical world of objects and events, but also with the more-than-practical world of customs and cultural traditions peculiar to a certain civilization."[60] In other words, if we are familiar with Western traditions and Christianity religion then we can recognize the figure of Jesus through various conventions of representation (long hair, white skin, lowered gaze, etc.). The iconographic is a cultural reading of various features that, when combined together, signify through convention.[61] Moreover, we might think of Panofsky's *iconographical* level as similar to the identification and labeling of the various conventional meanings to images and sounds in *High Noon*. The sound of the horse gallop expresses both conventionally and contextually. However, for Panofsky, both of these levels only serve as stepping stones for *iconology*, or the search for *symbolic value*. Instead of stopping at "finding" the icons, we must ask ourselves why the author decided to represent (e.g. *The Last Supper*), in this way. Panofsky moves away from the text itself toward the institution that led to its creation. The claim is that icons manifest in various places and times because they are symptoms of their cultural contexts, as are their creators. In the case of *The Last Supper*, part of its symbolic value arises from its use of constructed perspective, which helps place it in a certain time period.

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[60] Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 5.

[61] Of course, this meaning can also come from a textual level. We know that this is Jesus because the painting is entitled *The Last Supper*, which has cultural significance. The same can be said for form in music. Many times we know a work begins in sonata form because of the labeling of the work as a sonata. However, assuming no title was available for either the sonata or the painting above, we could still glean the meaning of each through generically learned principles. That is, if a piece begins a main theme that transitions and modulates to another key area, which begins with a subordinate theme, then we might understand it as a sonata even without the initial designation. Furthermore, we can recognize musical works as being in sonata form even if titled something else and works titled as "sonata" as not adhering to sonata form.

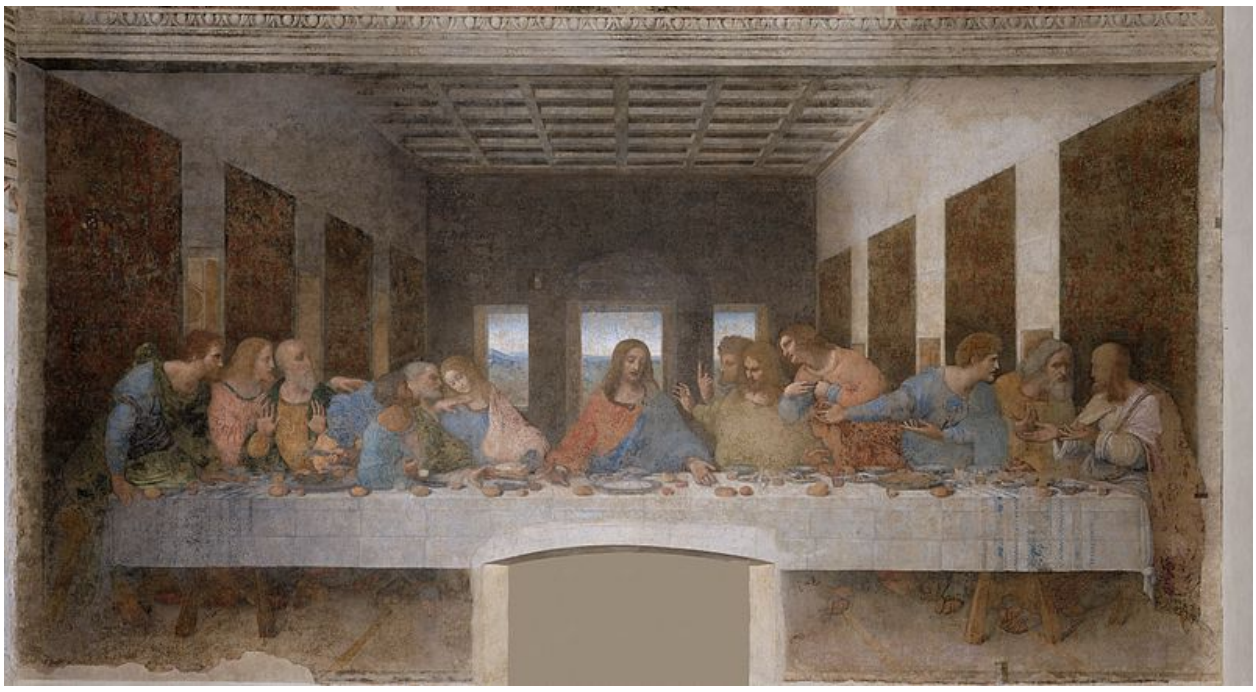

Figure 1.8: *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci

Later work by W. J. T. Mitchell posits that photography is not void of these conventionalisms, despite its "natural" appearance. For example, Mitchell points to the invention of artificial perspective by Alberti in 1435 as a convention that continues to operate in photography.

> The effect of the invention was nothing less than to convince an entire civilization that it possessed an infallible method of representation, a system for the automatic and mechanical production of truths about both the material and the mental worlds…Aided by the political and economic ascendance of Western Europe, artificial perspective conquered the world of representation under the banner of reason, science, and objectivity…And the invention of a machine (the camera) built to produce this sort of image has, ironically, only reinforced the conviction that this is the natural mode of representation. What is natural is, evidently, what we can build a machine to do for us.[62]

[62] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 37.

Similarly, Johnathan Crary interrogates the discipline of contemporary optics as born out of the 19th century's separation of the senses.[63] For him, the modern world of vision appeared out of a world that first favored the tactile, through various interactions of systems of power that caused a separation of the senses in the 19th century. Similar histories about hearing exist.[64]

As with iconographic studies, the interpretation of acousticons must not stop at a pre-iconographic level, but venture into the iconographic and iconological. First, we must interpret how the acousticon fits in relation to other acousticons and visual icons in its filmic context. This way we can relate a general reading of the sound as "horse gallop" to a more contextual reading of how it functions in a particular film. Secondly, we must consider it iconologically. How has it come to represent, symbolically, in the way that it has? We might, for instance, ask, as Monelle does, how the horse gallop came to represent, symbolically, the notion of nobility, heroism, or war. In the next section I will consider one such case in *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Specifically, I will look at how the film deploys helicopter acousticons, how those acousticons relate to each other and other acousticons deployed in the film, and the helicopter acousticon's origin in the warhorse topic.

UNSOUND CALVARY: ACOUSTICONS IN *APOCALYPSE NOW*

"War is hell." – *Union General William Sherman*

Darkness—a rhythmic swooshing sound accompanies a stark visual image, though its distortion makes identifying the sound's source impossible. Even so, the sound has a Doppler effect, giving the unknown object an impression of moving closer to and farther away. An image

[63] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.
[64] There are many histories of sound, some of which will be considered in the next chapter. See Sterne, *Audible Past*; Johnson, *Listening in Paris*; Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing*.

of a thick jungle shoreline fades in and small tufts of smoke rise from the bottom of the frame. The sound again draws closer until a helicopter glides through the frame, left to right. The helicopter is close, so close that it does not fit entirely in the frame. The image of the helicopter acts as a sync point, its visual presence coincides with a spike in volume of the swooshes, retroactively understood as the stylized sound of the helicopter's propellers. The Doors' song "The End" begins to play with the entrance of the helicopter, and smoke at the bottom of the screen changes color from white to a napalm yellow.

At this point, a four-minute montage begins. It overlays images of the jungle beach with the far off stare of Captain Benjamin L. Willard (Martin Sheen), Figure 1.9, and the ceiling fan in his hotel bedroom, Figure 1.10. There are other images of objects in the room: military tags, letters from home, a mostly empty glass of cognac, and a gun under a pillow. Yet the ceiling fan comes back again and again, implying that the fan is the object of Willard's contemplation as he stares upward from his bed. Similarly, the sounds of the choppers weave in and out behind the psychedelia of "The End." As the montage fades, so too does the music, both in a sense of volume and distance as Jim Morrison's distinct voice transforms into a tinny echo. Soon all that remains is an extreme close up of Willard, a reverse shot of the ceiling fan, and the sounds of a helicopter propeller synced to the rhythm of the ceiling fan. The timbre of the sound makes a noticeable shift as Willard glances to his left towards a window with its blinds pulled. The helicopter sound, we are to believe, has shifted from dream space to Willard's hotel room. In a point-of-view shot, he moves towards the window and peeks through the blinds. The sound reinforces this character perspective through internal sound,[65] for when Willard moves towards

[65] Chion defines this internal sound as, "sound which, although situated in the present action, corresponds to the physical and mental interior of a character." See: *Audio-vision*, 76.

the blinds, the sound of a helicopter passes overhead. Yet, in the partly obscured view outside, no helicopter appears.

Figure 1.9: Captain Willard's Dream

Figure 1.10: The Ceiling Fan in Captain Willard's Room

Apocalypse Now, based loosely on Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, follows Captain Willard on his mission to locate, infiltrate, and assassinate a well-decorated Colonel Walter E. Kurtz (Marlon Brando) who has gone rogue and retreated in the depths of the Cambodian jungle. Kurtz has, as one general suggests, an "unsound" mind, though the film focuses on Willard's mental condition. Mental unsoundness marks many of the other soldiers Willard meets along the way, whose exposure to the violent horrors of the Vietnam War has left a mark on their psyches. The captain is unsure what he will do when he eventually finds Kurtz, since his fascination with the man continues to grow after each violent experience he encounters

on his way up the Nung river. Willard does eventually kill Kurtz, but for a different reason than his superiors gave him. For, at least the film posits, there is no return from the distorting violence of war; one can only embrace the horror of it or find peace in death. The traumatic horror of war makes itself felt throughout the film through various sonic distortions. However, the helicopter as acousticon, and the thematic role it plays throughout the film as a modernized version of the warhorse, captures this horror of war and gives it a particularly captivating form.

"It is impossible," Kurtz says to Willard, "for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means." Kurtz was well educated and quickly climbed the army ranks, but somehow lost his mind and ended up in the jungle with a tribe of people who worship him like a demigod. Near the end of the film Kurtz explains to Willard, now his captive, why he made the decisions he did: once you have experienced horror you can either make it a friend or an enemy. Regardless, horror distorts one's view of the world and once that distortion sets in it cannot, in the view of the film, be undone. Literal distortion plays a crucial role in the sound track and manifests in various guises throughout. When, during Willard's debriefing, Colonel Lucas (Harrison Ford) plays a tape of Kurtz reciting a dream, the tape fizzles and cracks. It also suffers from a high degree of warping, the tape seemingly bending under the weight of Kurtz's spoken words. The warping and low fidelity can simply be attributed to the limits of surveillance technology, but it nevertheless adds an eeriness to Kurtz's dream and perhaps a resistance to recording. In fact, Kurtz's voice is always distorted, always evading and resisting total capture. Even when Kurtz and Willard meet face to face, a deep echo accompanies Kurtz's every word, though most noticeable in his infamous final words: "the horror." At one point, a young serviceman, Miller (Lawrence Fishburne), receives an audiotape from his mother. He plays the recording just as an ambush on the crew ensues. Miller never hears the end of his

mother's message, though the recorded voice continues, anempathetically speculating about the boy's lovely future as the camera holds over his lifeless body.[66] This audio recording divulges a disconnect between home and war. Home is a skewed memory for these men; a world that they know exists, but one to which they can never fully return.

In a battle at Dong Lo bridge, the most remote of the American outposts, Willard makes his way through a maze of trenches looking for a commanding officer. Sheer madness unfolds all around him as rockets, flairs, and gunshots come from every direction and screams of pain and terror abound. A Hendrix-esque guitar solo seems to be the only consistent sound through the war-torn soundscape. The solo—which we are led to believe is being piped throughout the trenches from a small, battery-powered radio—is itself wild, evading any sense of a tonal center. It is as if we are hearing the music through the heads of the men onscreen. Though some remnants of home remain, and the sound is comprehensibly an electric guitar, its musical elements have lost all rational sense, perhaps suggesting a situation akin to the distorted sounds of Schumann's *Carnaval* in *Possessed* (1947).[67] These radio echoes and tape warpings help sound the soldier's "unsound" minds, emphasizing isolation and violence through a distortive filter.

The dissonant juxtaposition of home and war is best represented in a base USO show. The show involves a group of Playboy playmates performing for a large auditorium full of

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[66] "*Anempathetic sound:* Sound—usually diegetic music—that seems to exhibit conspicuous indifference to what is going on in the film's plot, creating a strong sense of the tragic. For example, a radio continues to play a happy tune even as the character who first turned it on has died." See Chion, *Audio-vision*, 221-222.

[67] Franz Waxman discusses his musical representation of Louise Howell's (Joan Crawford) insanity at length in a radio interview with Lawrence Morton. "A number of times during the picture, Van Heflin plays the piano—plays a passage from Schumann's *Carnaval*…Now at the point in the film where she realizes that he really doesn't love her, which is the point at which her mind and emotions being to crack up, Helfin plays the Schumann piece again. Heflin is apparently playing the piece correctly, what the audience hears this time is a distorted version, omitting all the sharps and flats, which suggests what Miss Crawford is hearing. That is, the distortion of the music corresponds to the distortion of normal emotions." See "A Radio Interview with Franz Waxman," in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, ed. Mervin Cooke, 143.

servicemen. A live band plays "Susie Q" in the background as the women sing and dance and the soldiers cheer them on. It does not take long for the men to act out. A few men start calling out to the women, tempers rise in the audience and, finally, the soldiers begin storming the stage. The once prominent sounds of the band crumble and the chaos of angry shouts and the sound of a chopper fade in. The women and their producer, fearing for their lives, board the chopper and take off. As they do, the only sound from the band is the electric guitar, though a close inspection of the sequence shows that the guitarist and the drummer do not play their instruments and instead duck to avoid the rising helicopter. In any case, the guitar becomes, like the sounds of radio and tape, more and more distorted. The amplifier it is connected to produces quite a lot of feedback as well. Both resemble the sounds of the helicopter: the feedback mimics the sound of a helicopter starting its engine while the amplifier transmits an effect similar to the Doppler effect used on the chopper blades in the very opening of the film. Indeed, the helicopter and the band are the two main diegetic sounds of this scene, with the sound of rioting soldiers thrown in here and there. The contrast of the chopper is a sonic reminder that the USO event offers only a semblance of home, a spectacle brought to the warfront, but whose remoteness is still felt. Once the two sounds crash into one another, the music loses its representative quality of the domestic and is pounded and molded until it is bent into the proper shape of war—the helicopter.

It is the helicopter as acousticon that, in this film, unquestionably embodies the horror of war. As an audiovisual image, helicopters pervade the film. Even when they are not literally present, helicopters show up in various guises, like the ceiling fan in the opening shot. In the very scene in which Kurtz explains his horror to Willard, a slow moving shadow evocative of a chopper blade moves slowly across the colonel's face. Helicopters also act as a leitmotif for Captain Willard's own unsound mind, as evidenced in the opening sequence of the film. The

warping of the sounds and the phantom chopper in Willard's dream in the opening sequence suggests the captain's distorted worldview before his mission to kill Kurtz even begins. A mere fifteen minutes later, during the captain's debriefing, a general reveals to Willard that Kurtz became unhinged after he joined Special Forces. "Every man has got a breaking point. You and I have them. Walt Kurtz has reached his and very obviously he has gone insane." As these words are spoken, the sound of a helicopter builds in the background. It happens again as the officers reveal Willard's mission, to assassinate Kurtz: a helicopter's engines can be heard warming up, the sound rising in pitch. Both times its source remains ambiguous, but its meaning is not. For what it suggests as internal sound is a sort of bubbling up as a sign of Willard's own trauma, the warping of his own dream. Even if we interpret it as diegetic sound, it is no coincidence that the officers underscore the words "insane" and "terminate," suggesting the damage the violence of war leaves on the soldier's soul.

The acousticon's most prevalent place in the film is also of the better-known sequences, where Willard and his crew accompany Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore (Robert Duval), commander of the 1st battalion, 9th Air Calvary, on a raid of a nearby village.[68] In this sequence the sound track explicitly connects the acousticon to the musical warhorse through the juxtaposition of helicopters and Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." Willard and the boat crew are scheduled to rendezvous with the chopper squad so that they may safely be escorted to the mouth of the river and continue on their journey. The night before, Willard and Kilgore discuss potential drop-off points, one of which the men refer to as "Charlie's Point." Kilgore initially nixes the location because of its "hairiness," but he changes his mind after his men unwittingly reveal the beach as

[68] For a full historical account of this scene and the interplay with Wagner and *Apocalypse Now* see James Lastra, "Film and the Wagnerian Aspiration: Thoughts on Sound Design and the History of the Senses," in *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound*, ed. Jay Beck and Tony Grajeda (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 123-138.

a prime surfing spot, one of Kilgore's hobbies. The new plan is to take the point in an all-out raid and though other men suggest several less cavalier strategies, Kilgore has made up his mind. "This is the 1st of the 9th Air Cav, son. Air mobile. I can take that point and hold it as long as I'd like…" Underneath this dialogue, two important sounds act as foreboding for the next sequence: an unknown soldier hums Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" and a helicopter engine is heard warming up. The former alludes to the Air Calvary's practice of blasting the piece over their helicopter loudspeakers when riding into a raid. The latter works as a sound advance that reveals the chopper source in the next scene: an airfield littered with choppers. Men carrying guns and surfboards run back and forth as the camera pans to follow Kilgore's path. As the men board and take off, a lone soldier plays his bugle, seen in Figure 1.11. The "call to arms" number is commonly associated with a cavalry charge in countless other radio shows and films. Of course there are several other cues outside of the sound track that help narrow its possible meaning: the reference to "Air Cavalry," but also the cavalry gear Kilgore wears, a yellow bandana, and the crossed sabers logo patched on the front of his hat, see Figure 1.12. However, it is the acousticonicity of the helicopter that imbues the image with both a sense of intrepidness and horror.

Figure 1.11: Bugler playing

Figure 1.12 Kilgore and wearing his cavalry gear

Horror takes shape in the following scene as the sounds of the bugle and choppers fade out and the underscoring fades in, accompanying a shot of the sun rising behind a sky full of these death machines. Though the more iconic chopper swooshes have disappeared, a less iconic, more symbolic version saturates the film's score. The helicopters appear in the score in two musical versions: one resembling the sound of the chopper's blades and the other its starting engine. The chopper blade acousticon transforms into the sounds of a synthesizer that displace the sounds of the swooshes of chopper blades from the prior scene, not unlike the rhythmic

bursts of the bugle call displacing the sounds of a galloping horse. Here, using its iconic properties, the sound of the choppers transfers from the diegetic space to the film score. The chopper blade sound acts as an accompaniment to a much more ominous sound of a single rising pitch that resembles the sounds of an engine starting up. Its iconic quality is in its ever-rising sound that also gives a sense of uneasiness. Additionally, this engine acousticon resembles the sound of another object: air raid sirens.

As they approach their target the sound of the helicopter blades, as well as the dialogue, fades back in. Each chopper projects Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." After cueing the music, Kilgore explains that he plays Wagner simultaneously to build troop morale and to scare his enemies. The musical horse evoked by "Ride of the Valkyries" is an inversion of the heroic warhorse signified by the bugle and is more akin to the ominous chopper icons produced in the underscoring. Monelle considers Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" in great detail during his case study of the horse topic where he considers it as a subtopic: the dysphoric warhorse. He attributes this dysphoric form, with "somber and ominous coloring,"[69] not to the medieval figure of death, but to instead the Witches' Sabbath, citing an early example in the final movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. In Nordic myths, the Valkyries' task was "to ride through the air and hover over the battlefield, ready to transport the dead warriors to Valhalla and occasionally to hasten their demise by helping one side."[70]

Many parallels may be drawn between Monelle's reading and the use of "Ride of the Valkyries" in *Apocalypse Now*. And, perhaps the latter has influenced Monelle's reading of

[69] Monelle, *The Sense of Music,* 61.
[70] Ibid., 62.

Wagner's music.[71] The helicopters and the music they project are harbingers of death to the village. This heralding is not just connected to the music, but to the sound of U.S. air combat in general. Willard and his men initially stumble upon Kilgore's unit when they hear air raids being carried out further along the shoreline. Again, in the first shot from the perspective of the Vietnamese, a group of children are singing in what appears to be a school and are interrupted by the sounds of helicopters and then by the sound of Wagner's music. The music marks two points of contact with the village: first, through the syncing of the music and the release of weapons it marks the beginning of engagement with the enemy. After fading out for a short period, the music sounds again as the helicopters land and deploy their troops. The music continues through the violence as both sides exchange fire and buildings and outposts explode. It is obliterated under the first violence carried out against the cavalry unit as a bomb in the center square explodes. A helicopter lands in the square to pick up a wounded soldier only to be met with a similar demise as a local throws a grenade into the helicopter. It explodes in a ball of flame and men still on fire pour out the sides of the remains of the craft. The warhorse and the violence of the Vietnam war meet head on.

The Valkyrie music, however, has a different, intertextual layer as well: it is used in the original score for *The Birth of A Nation* (1917).[72] In this film, the music underscores a group of

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[71] Matthew Wilson Smith suggests that the cynical use of Wagner originates in *Apocalypse Now* and not in earlier uses like in *The Birth of A Nation*: "the Wagnerism of *Birth* was brought to the fore in an outburst of communal ecstasy, or, more precisely, in a marriage of the integrative techniques of the *Gesamtkuntswerk* with the full throated audience-response conventions of American melodrama," "American Valkyries: Richard Wagner, D. W. Griffith, and the Birth of Classic Cinema," *Modernism/modernity* 15, No. 2 (2008): 238.

[72] For more on the intertextual relationship between *The Birth of A Nation* and *Apocalypse Now*, see Lastra, "Wagnerian Aspiration," 123-138. On Breil's musical score for *The Birth of A Nation* and the "motif of barbarism," see Lerner, Neil and Jane Gaines, "The Orchestration of Affect: The Motif of Barbarism in Breil's *The Birth of a Nation* Score," *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, edited by Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 252-268. For a historical account on the use of Wagner in *The Birth of A Nation*, see Matthew Wilson Smith, "American Valkyries: Richard Wagner, D. W. Griffith, and the Birth of Classic Cinema," *Modernism/modernity* 15, No. 2 (2008): 221-242.

Ku Klux Klansmen on horses charging to the rescue to save a group of white villagers from an attacking group of blacks.[73] The reference is not only musical, but structural. As Gilles Deleuze explains, Griffith's *The Birth of A Nation* exemplifies the American school of montage, an organic unity (see Example 1.13). This type of montage begins with two different sets in conflict and ends by converging them.

> Indeed, it is the nature of the organic set that it should continually be threatened: the accusation raised against the Negroes in *The Birth of a Nation* is that of wanting to shatter the newly-won unity of the United States by using the South's defeat to their own advantage…the convergent actions tend towards a single end, reaching the site of the duel to reverse its outcome, to save innocence or reconstitute the compromised unity – like the gallop of the horsemen who come to rescue the besieged.[74]

The Birth of A Nation was and still is blanketed in controversy in its heroic portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan and this cultural encrustation is at play in Coppola's film as well. It, too, alludes to the organic montage in the American fight to reunite the North and South, and the acceleration of this junction is picked up by the gallop of the choppermen, seen in Figure 1.14. Of course, Coppola's version is a perverse twist: the rush to unity does not involve saving but obliterating the innocent. The first sight we get of the enemy is not of loyal South Vietnamese in an onslaught with the Viet Cong, but instead a group of singing schoolchildren who must be rushed to safety. The only outcome is horror, and that horror plays out in the chaos and violence of war, in the history of the Vietnam war, and, here, in the very souls of the men who fight it.

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[73] As James Lastra notes, "The film *itself* [*Apocalypse Now*] leads us to another 1915—the 1915 of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, whose chilling use of the same musical selection in a strikingly parallel sequence forces the historically aware spectator to see with horrifying clarity the suddenly visible, transhistorical patterns of U.S. racism and imperialism—patterns as apparently out of place as a cavalry in Vietnam, but just as disturbingly present." For context, see, "Wagnerian Aspiration," 137.

[74] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, (London: Athlone, 1986), 31.

Figure 1.13: Organic unity in *The Birth of A Nation*

Figure 1.14 Intertextual reference to *The Birth of A Nation* in *Apocalypse Now*

CONCLUSION

Apocalypse Now inherits a long and varied history of the acousticonic horse born from art music from the 18th and 19th centuries and epitomized in the sounds of "The Ride of the Valkyries." It also indirectly makes use of the acousticonic helicopter, itself indebted to the coconut effect in early cinematic and radio practices. Both of these iconic horses, whether musical or sonic, play an integral role in films by using connotation and convention to tell us about the horse and its rider. That holds true through silent films that made use of music or house sound effects, or, like *Napoleon* (1927), uses visual effects to compensate for the absence of

sound.[75] That tradition continues today and the boundaries between music and sound become evermore blurred. The sounds of horses continue today whether they are those of a heroic cowboy, a silly knight, or a horrific helicopter.

A clear line between music and sound in the sound track is suspect, but an analysis open to the acousticonic elements of any sound, whether interpreted as musical or as effect, can be fruitful. Interpreted together as acousticons in *Apocalypse Now*, helicopters work musically regardless of whether they are diegetic or nondiegetic, synced or not. Moreover, what we find when leaving the confines of the score is that some elements of the music that do not appear in traditional scores overlap with sonic elements. In the following chapter I will consider in more detail those elements typically excluded from musical study. Specifically, I will consider how fidelity and foregrounding, when in the appropriate audiovisual context, can elicit a conventional meaning of a character's interior sound. Acousticons of the interior are not new and music theorists have considered musical interiors before, but what the acousticon allows is for one to explore the connection between a musical and a sonic character interior and what one might make of the similarities and differences between them.

[75] Chion identifies this as the *suggestion of sound*, using the image to compensate for a lack of sound. *Film, a Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman, (NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 4-7. In *Napoleon* (1927) the filmmakers attempted to capture the energy of a cavalry charge by mounting a camera on a running horse.

Chapter 2: Acousticons of the Interior

> The film [*Apocalypse Now*] Francis is making is a metaphor for a journey into the self. He has made that journey and is still making it. It's scary to watch someone you love go to the center of himself and confront his fears, fear of failure, fear of death, fear of going insane. You have to fail a little, die a little, go insane a little, to come out the other side. The process is not over for Francis." – Eleanor Coppola in *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (1991)

In the previous chapter, I considered the various sonic manifestations of helicopters in *Apocalypse Now* as a leitmotivic acousticon linked to a history of the musical warhorse topic. I also posited that the helicopter acousticon was part of a larger collection of sounds, including warped recordings and distorted radios, that came to sonically signify the trauma that the Vietnam War imprinted on these soldiers, particularly Captain Willard. This sonic warping starts from the beginning of the film with Captain Willard's psychedelic nightmare, where the ominous sounds of the helicopter are indicative of psychological trauma. The distorted beating of chopper blades, the phantom helicopter heard flying over the hotel, and, finally, a mutation of the ambient sounds of beeping and bustling Saigon traffic into insect buzzes and chirps all suggest that what we hear on the sound track may be only a fabrication of Willard's mind. In short, the sound track uses acousticons to transport the audience to an impossible place, Willard's subjective interior, as a way of indicating the traumatic state of his psychological being.

The primary way filmmakers produce a sense of subjective interiority is through a subjective, point-of-audition sound (POA). Subjective POA sound is a sort of acousticonic corollary to the point-of-view (POV) shot. POV shots give the impression that the view from the frame is that of a particular character in the diegesis. Similarly, subjective POA gives the impression that what the audience hears is also what a specific character is hearing. Michel

Chion notes that subjective point-of-audition sound often occurs in scenes involving phone conversations. The sound track frequently projects the voice on the other line even though that voice should only be audible to the character holding the phone.[1] POV shots and internal sound often occur concurrently, though they do not have to. In *Apocalypse Now*, for instance, the juxtaposition of the close up of Willard's face and the napalm bombing suggest the latter as a figment of his imagination. Later, when Willard awakens, the sounds of the chopper continue accompanying an image of the ceiling fan. The distortion of the acousticon, chopper blades, and its alignment with a harmless, everyday object, the ceiling fan, give us a sense of psychological distortion experienced by Willard. His nightmare continues once he awakens, haunting him in his hotel room. The lack of a source, that is, the missing visual complement of the helicopter at the end of the sequence, further reinforces the sound's status as fantastic illusion.

Subjective POA sound, or what Chion also refers to as "internal sound" here provides a dual function. First, it helps the audience identify with the characters and invest in the diegetic space. Secondly, it uses acousticons to indicate that this subjectivized space differs from the ordinary; it is distorted in some way. Internal sound need not indicate trauma. For instance, recall the use of imagined sound in *Amadeus* and the increase of fidelity for the recording in *The Shawshank Redemption*. Nevertheless, head sound does frequently represent some sort of internal trauma that would otherwise escape signification. As Mark Kerins explains, POV/POA sequences must stand out and draw attention to themselves, aesthetically. That is they need to "make legible" to their audiences that they represent the perspective of a specific character.[2] For

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[1] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), 91-92.
[2] Mark Kerins, *Beyond Dolby (Stereo): Cinema in the Digital Sound Age* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 182.

acousticons of a distorted—whether psychologically or otherwise—internal space, this rings particularly true. Close-up sounds, like those of the telephone receiver or perhaps the breath of the character, are often magnified or sound in high fidelity as a way of indicating their special point of origin. Again, the sonic distortion of the ceiling fan in Willard's hotel suggests a parallel psychological distortion in Willard's mind. Indeed, these sonic indicators of trauma are quite common in war films. Such is the case in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), where muffled sound indicates Captain Miller's (Tom Hanks) shell shock after a large explosion. "Here the film presents what [Miller's] brain *thinks* it's hearing rather than what he actually *is* hearing, since it becomes clear soon after that his ears are working fine."[3]

Apocalypse Now and *Saving Private Ryan* are just two of many films that use internal sound as a way of representing both the head space of a character as well as a particular trauma or personal flaw. A parallel to internal sound, which also typically marks an internalized flaw, exists in music in the key area of ♭VI. Like head sound, which often calls attention to itself through a noticeable style shift, the motion to the lowered submediant historically subverts the conventional tonic-dominant harmonic motion. That is, the harmony of the lowered sixth scale degree usually evades the normative tonic-dominant motion that defines tonality of the 18th and early 19th centuries. In fact, we might think of the tonal system as, more or less, equivalent to a normative subject position.[4] Susan McClary argues that the very tonal fabric of Western music is

[3] Kerins provides more examples in *Beyond Dolby (Stereo)*, 188.

[4] Historically, these compositional frameworks apply further to the dominant narratives of idolized Western art composers. Generally speaking, the worship of Beethoven as hero, explored in depth by Scott Burnham, links his music to the act—it is music that does as well as music that tells. By contrast, the dominant narratives of Franz Schubert, whether about his music, its venue, or his sexuality, are interiorized such that the composer is portrayed as much more introspective than Beethoven. For more on Beethoven, see Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). For an account of contemporary representations of Schubert, see Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian*

a sort of virtual, musical subjectivity with which a listener may identify.[5] For her, this musical subject, or actor or agent, has its primary formation in da capo aria form. A predecessor to sonata form, and a product of an emerging rationalism of the Enlightenment, da capo arias guaranteed the return of a musical idea and its initial key, regardless of the various affections correlated with key areas explored in B sections. McClary asserts:

> …this rational order [ABA'] was the newly consolidated version of tonality, which possessed both the flexibility necessary to produce viable depictions of the various passions and also a hierarchy of relationships that drew all moments of the composition together into a single goal-oriented network. Far from "universal," this device for prolonging a unified trajectory through a standardized set of modulations appeared only late in the seventeenth century, along with other genres (e.g. the novel) that began to trace narratives of centered subjectivity.[6]

Aria form, and later sonata form, then, served as a container of the modern subject where tonic, aligned with the primary thematic material of the A section, functioned as a symbolic home. The B section, usually in the dominant key with new thematic material, acted like a journey away, and the return of the first theme in the original key like a triumphant return to home. In terms of these conventions, the key relation tonic-dominant-tonic, formed the basic underlying tonal premise of stasis-conflict-stasis that came to dominate analytical theories of musical forms of art music. This key relation became the most common and necessary formulation in tonal music and, as a virtual musical subject, the tonic-dominant key relation became a common,

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Musicology, ed. Philip Brett, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 205-234 and Suzanne Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[5] In her book, *Conventional Wisdom*, Susan McClary considers tonality as a system that provides the very foundation of understanding music as subjectivity itself. Embedded within the tonal system is an abstract, goal-oriented, linearly and narratively driven force that suggests a similar beginning and ending place: tonic. "As critics as different as Robert Morgan and Jean-Francois Lyotard have argued, the gap between the spontaneous-seeming events of the surface and the underlying structure produces the illusion of depth. Thus, the relationships between outward appearance and the unwavering core of subjective interiority—relationships that also preoccupied philosophers and literary figures at the time—find lucid articulation in tonal music," Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 67-68.

[6] Ibid., 73.

conventional model upon which to base a virtual, subjective action to a point where its relation has been naturalized through centuries of repetition and enculturation.

Contrary to the conventional model of action embodied in the tonic-dominant relationship, lowered submediant subverts the symbol of outward action to one of inner feeling. The deployment of the submediant notably occurs frequently in music from the Romantic period as a sort of interruption of action, which in turn implied a sense of introspection.[7] As film historically draws extensively on Romantic musical material and ideology, many of these appeals to marking a shift to the interior are noticeable in film as well.[8] However, as described above, the filmic medium afforded new ways of signifying to audiences through sound, especially with the coming of sound technology. Thus, filmmakers had both musical and sonic recourses as a way of invoking internal space for characters, especially with the rise of sound film in the 1930s.[9] As an example of how filmmakers employed both musical and sonic codes of a character's interiority, I will consider early sound horror films (1931-1936). While character development is fundamental to narrative film, horror films in particular focus on the abnormality of the monstrous subject. As such, they offer a useful starting point for considering conventional sonic figures that mark the flawed, subjective interior.

ACOUSTICONS OF THE MONSTROUS INTERIOR IN 1930S HORROR FILMS

Like the Romantic idiom many adopted for scoring film in both the silent and early sound

[7] Most obviously in the case of the deceptive cadence, but Susan McClary provides a rich expansion of other types of lowered submediant interruptions in "Pitches, Expression, Ideology: An Exercise in Mediation," *Enclitic* 7 (1983): 76-86.

[8] Daniel K. L. Chua, "Listening to the Self: *The Shawshank Redemption* and the Technology of Music," *19th-Century Music* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 341-355.

[9] There are, of course, several other ways in which filmmakers might use sonic and/or musical devices to invoke a character's interior. However, these are two of the most common, so I will explore them here.

film, the classic horror monster has its origins in the 19th century with novels featuring a Gothic monster. These monsters are generally defined by their physical appearance. Unlike the psychological scarring explored in many war films, like *Apocalypse Now* or *Saving Private Ryan*, or the distortions of the social self, which I will explore in the following section, the Gothic monster and the classic horror monster's inner darkness appears outwardly, in physical distortions of the body. That is, their deviance and moral turpitude manifest in signifiers of excess spilling out from their interior to exterior, making their abnormalities palpable. Their skin bears an inner monstrosity and, in the words of Judith Halberstam, through the breach of the subject's body, "the outside becomes the inside and the hide no longer conceals or contains, it offers itself up as text, as body, as monster."[10]

But horror films of the 1930s, taking advantage of the haunting, sonorous power of a rapidly emerging sound film practice, also portray the monstrous interior/exterior by employing acousticons that transgressed the uncanny, liminal space separating the sonic interior from its exterior. In particular, monsters of classic horror films were often portrayed as musicians whose abnormalities took musical and sonic form. This acousticonically marked abnormality is particular to monsters that lack the transgressive, physical skin described by so many film scholars. Instead these monsters harness a Romantic ideology that identifies musical expression as the outer manifestation of inner dispositions, using their musical performance as a sonic skin that embodies their monstrosity. Three layers of interlocking acousticons make up these musical performances—(1) instrumentation and its timbral associations, (2) the associations of the music itself, and (3) the sonic conventions of the 1930s sound track. All three work as acoustical

[10] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 7.

moments of excess that signify the monstrous internal state spilling into an outward performance. Employing hermeneutic analysis of specific, diegetic performances, I investigate how these interdependent acousticons work to project monstrosity in the 1930s classic horror film. Specifically, I consider Reuben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the 1936 production *Dracula's Daughter*. I have chosen *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* because it features the most common monster musician archetype, the organ-playing mad genius, whose skillful yet diabolical performance expresses his superior intellect and madness, respectively. Out of the other films featuring the mad genius organist, this film in particular is notable because of the pivotal role music performance plays throughout the film. Moreover, as I will discuss below, it offers a normative organ performance that serves as a helpful foil for a later "mad" performance by the doctor. Contrarily, *Dracula's Daughter* provides an intriguing counterexample to the more typical mad genius/organist. Instead, a Countess masks her vampirism behind the normative timbre of a piano character piece. While both case studies involve different types of sonic skin, the music always betrays their monstrosity.

The Organ and the Mad Genius: Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Before moving to these particular films, however, I would like first to consider what brought about the organ playing mad genius and why it serves as the quintessential musical monster cliché. First, the mad genius is the standard monster-type from the classic horror period. Film scholar Andrew Tudor identifies the "mad scientist" archetype as the most prevalent one through the 1930s and into the 1950s.[11] Tudor's term "mad scientist" is a bit of a misnomer, however, because he actually uses it to refer to a diverse group of madmen outside of science

[11] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Cambridge: Basic Blackwell, Inc., 1989), 133-157.

proper, including surgeons, magicians, and even an evil architect. Thus the "mad scientist" of the 1930s horror film is a synecdoche for the mad genius. His physical skin was more often than not functionally human rather than monstrous. If his skin bore any abnormalities they were modest in comparison to other monster archetypes of the time. Instead, following the model of *Frankenstein*, the genius' monstrosity materializes in his monstrous creations. Musical performance, being an expressive creation, works in similar ways: communicating monstrosity by revealing the madness that lay within the genius.

If the mad genius is the most prevalent monster of the classic horror period, then the organ is the ultimate horror instrument. Julie Brown investigates why film monsters gravitate towards the instrument.[12] First, although the Gothic novel does not traditionally feature the organ, it often appears in or near Gothic spaces like cathedrals and tombs. The organ also has a direct connection to religious ritual that gives it an aura of the fantastic; its size, both materially and sonically, invites comparisons of monstrous proportions. Most importantly, organs were common fixtures in film houses around the country in the 1920s, and when sound film replaced silents in the 1930s the organ recalled the defunct, in-house performance practice that ruled cinemas a decade earlier.[13] In this sense, the organ functions as a sort of living relic. It seems fitting, then, to have monsters in early sound film playing an instrument encrusted with cultural signifiers of the Gothic, the monumental, and the dead.

One contrary example exists to the mad genius model in James Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein*, which uses the organ nondiegetically as a way of representing the acousticonic interior of the Monster. That is, the organ represents not the mad genius himself, but his creation.

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[12] Julie Brown, "Carnival of Souls and the Organs of Horror," in *Music in Horror Film: Listening to Fear*, ed. Neil Lerner (NY: Routledge, 2010), 1-20.
[13] Ibid.

Bride of Frankenstein picks up where *Frankenstein* left off: angry villagers have just burned down a windmill in an attempt to kill Dr. Frankenstein's creation. The Monster (Boris Karloff) survives the ordeal, however, and continues to torment the local villagers. Although violent when scared, he longs to become a member of society and, therefore, is somewhat more developed in this later film. It is not until the Monster meets a blind hermit that he shows true potential as an interactive human being. He stumbles upon the hermit's home where the sound of a lone violin sweetly playing a version of Schubert's "Ave Maria" emanates (see Figure 2.1). As the violin continues, an organ enters, nondiegetically, as accompaniment to both the violin and the image of the Monster. The hermit, who cannot see the Monster's horrific image, accepts him as a friend and invites him in for a meal. The music serves to communicate friendship for the Monster, who ends up staying and learning from the hermit. The music helps him trust the old man, who is the first person to successfully use fire around the Monster without sending him into a fit of rage.

Figure 2.1 The Monster listening to the violin as organ accompaniment plays nondiegetically

The Monster's fear for fire represents his primordial state; his love of music represents his social potential. Indeed, after a while the recluse teaches him how to speak basic words.

While Frankenstein may not perform music in the traditional sense, we might understand him as a participant in the act of music, what Christopher Small calls "musicking." For Small any act that plays a part in the music making process, whether it be the "artistic" tasks of composition and performance, or the tasks of sound mixing, and selling tickets, or even the active participation by a listener, also plays a social role in the creation of music.[14] While he may lack the skill to play, the Monster encourages his new friend to play often. After learning the basic distinction between good and bad, he hands the violin to his friend and yells, "Good!"

It is noteworthy that although the organ timbre accompanies the Monster, its tone is mellow and sweet, reflecting the Monster's disposition. Indeed, I would submit that in addition to the reasons observed by Brown, another reason for the horror-film appeal of the organ is the malleability of timbre. As William Rosar notes, 1930s horror films portray monsters as more than just a sign of otherness. Analogous to the varying timbres and dynamics of the organ, the Gothic monster can be compassionate and subtle as well as cold-blooded or harsh.[15] These classic monsters are generally not the purely evil, complete Other prevalent in 1950s films and later, but instead are often imbued with a tragic quality encouraging sympathy. Many monsters can become more or less monstrous depending on their disposition. In vampire films, for example, a vampire tends to appear less threatening if it has recently fed. A werewolf stays a man until the full moon; and mad geniuses tend to become more insane over the course of the film.

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[14] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).
[15] William H. Rosar, "Music for the Monsters: Universal Pictures' Horror Film Scores of the Thirties," *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 40, no. 4 (Fall 1983), 418.

The mad genius as monster, then, negotiates between varying degrees of monstrosity, states of being which the organ can convey through its varying timbres. Thus, the organ's timbre becomes a sonic mark, or an acousticon of the mad genius. As the madness of the monster increases, so too can the harshness of the organ's sound. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The film tells the story of the genius Dr. Jekyll (Frederick March), who notoriously concocts a potion meant to artificially suppress wickedness from the inner self in an attempt to purify the soul. Unfortunately, the mysterious mixture has the opposite effect and suppresses his civil nature. The potion transforms him into his alter ego, the wild and murderous Mr. Hyde. Early in the film Jekyll seems in control, but his insatiable desire to become Hyde eventually gets the better of him, and by the end he can no longer control himself and capriciously mutates into his monstrous form. This transformation occurs physically, transforming the light-skinned, respectable doctor into a dark-skinned, primate-like Doppelgänger. The racist implications here are conspicuous, as Judith Halberstam rightly asserts, in noting that Mamoulian's film "builds on a racial Darwinian undercurrent in [Robert Louis Stevenson's] story [based] upon racist conceptions of degeneration."[16]

The transformation also takes acousticonic form in the two organ performances presented in the film. Both feature music composed by Johann Sebastian Bach: the first a chorale prelude from Bach's Little Organ Book and the second the renowned Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. Jekyll's first performance, shot in POV, occurs in the opening sequence as a pair of hands appear over the manuals playing the chorale, as seen in Figure 2.2, the stops are set so that the organ emits a soft, light sound that matches the mood of the piece to that of Jekyll, who plays it

[16] Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 77-78; see also Virginia Wright Wexman, "Horrors of the Body: Hollywood's Discourse on Beauty and Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*," in *100 Years*, ed. Hirsch and Veeder, 288.

nonchalantly. The warm sound, low dynamics and, as Neil Lerner notes, the implied lyrics, "I beg, hear my complaint; the true faith, Lord, I aspire to which you wish to give me," help to wrap him in a shroud of piousness.[17] The music, however, suggests a different reading of the doctor.

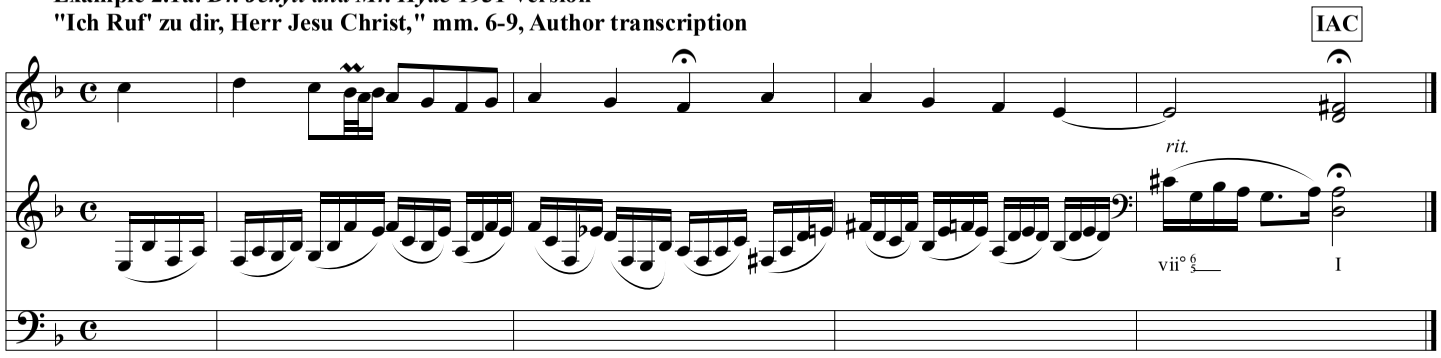
Figure 2.2: POV shot of Dr. Jekyll playing the organ

As seen in Example 2.1**,** Jekyll replaces the more inconclusive, deceptive cadence with an imperfect authentic cadence. While the inclusion of a Picardy third might reinforce Jekyll's warm disposition, it implies something further: the shifting of the ending from minor to major. That is, we might think of such a decision as a conscious intervention on the "natural" course of the piece, a convention that brings about a different ending than that implied by the logic of the mode. Jekyll's meddling with the cadence, then, parallels his attempt to meddle with his own humanity. Moreover, he breaks the piece off six measures too early. The hasty ending and the omitted beat from the original work both foreshadow the doctor's main flaw: his impatience, which becomes more and more apparent over the course of the film. It is this impatience in the form of sexual desire for his fiancée, Muriel (Rose Hobart), that first gets Jekyll into trouble. He

[17] Neil Lerner, "The Strange Case of Rouben Mamoulian's Sound Stew: The Uncanny Soundtrack in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1931)*" in *Music in Horror Film: Listening to Fear*, ed. Neil Lerner (NY: Routledge, 2010), 61.

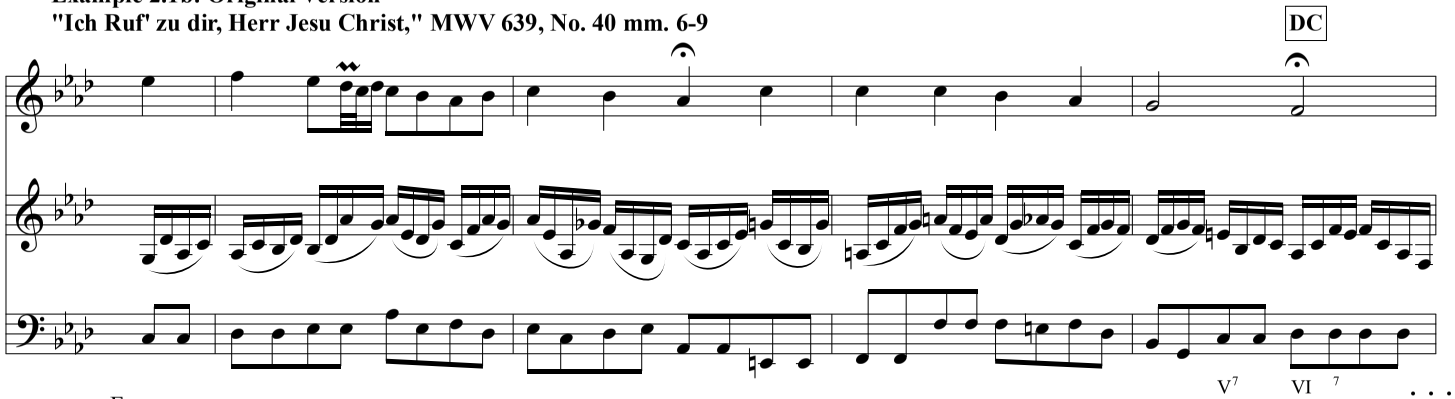
quarrels with Muriel's father in an attempt to move their wedding date earlier, leading to the father's refusal and, to the dismay of Jekyll, the father's absconding from London with Muriel. It is during Muriel's initial absence that Dr. Jekyll first unleashes Mr. Hyde. Over the coming months Jekyll spends more and more time as Hyde, and slowly but surely Hyde becomes the authoritative disposition.

Example 2.1a: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 1931 Version
"Ich Ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ," mm. 6-9, Author transcription



Dm*

Example 2.1b: Original Version
"Ich Ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ," MWV 639, No. 40 mm. 6-9



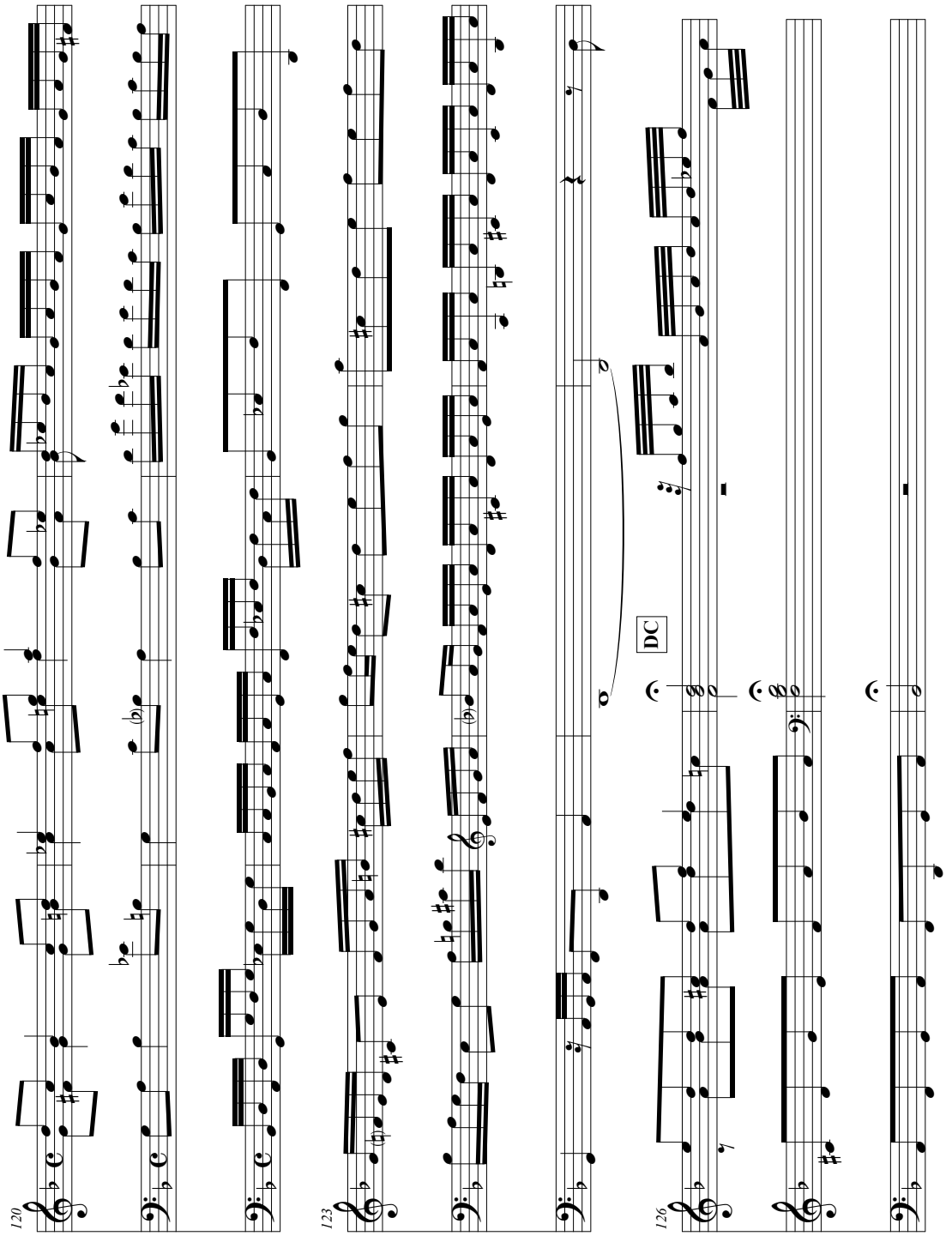
Fm

* Key signature reflects key of performance in the film

In light of this identity shift, a later performance of Bach's Toccata and Fugue alludes to a much different disposition than that suggested by the opening prelude. This second performance occurs after the return of Muriel and her father, who finally consents to move the wedding date. With this news Jekyll returns to his home and upon reporting his good fortune to his servant, plays his organ in elation, as seen in Figure 2.3. A mismatch exists, however, between Jekyll's elation and the music that emanates from the organ. As seen in Example 2.2, the passage comes from the middle of the Fugue and ends immediately before the entrance of the Recitative. While its comparatively deafening dynamics may convey exuberance, all other musical features forebode an ominous ending, especially the conclusion on a deceptive cadence, where the submediant provides a Mr. Hyde to contest Dr. Jekyll's tonic.

Figure 2.3: Jekyll/Hyde playing Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

Example 2.2: J.S. Bach *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565*



The deceptive cadence does offer a moment of repose, but its closure is only temporary and ultimately unstable. Furthermore, its very presence threatens an impending cadence on a minor tonic triad, which the fugue realizes in the recitative section. While that music never sounds, the film plot effectively supplants that of the fugue. After his performance, Jekyll makes a heartfelt, but utterly futile vow to rid the world of Hyde. But just like the deceptive cadence, Jekyll's vow only offers temporary relief. Indeed, that very evening Jekyll uncontrollably mutates into Hyde, misses his chance to reconcile with Muriel, and kills an innocent woman.

Although we see Jekyll performing the Fugue, I would contend that in fact this music belongs more to Hyde. It is true that it is both virtuosic and art music, suggesting both the genius and class of Jekyll. However, this logic operates under the assumption that Jekyll and Hyde are two separate beings, when in fact Hyde is the physical manifestation of Jekyll's primal self. As Jekyll himself points out in his opening speech in the film, "Man is truly not one, but two;" one side is the socialized, but frustrated entity and the other the animalistic drive. We might think of Hyde, "hiding" in the "hide" of Jekyll, but in fact the two reside in the same body that they each fight to control. As Halberstam sees it, the skin of Jekyll acts as a surface costume for Hyde, who is the "base costume" of Jekyll, or rather what lies beneath his "respectability."[18] And that base costume surfaces in Jekyll's impatient behavior and unchecked sexual desire. Similarly, I would argue that while Hyde's physical presence may not be seen, it sounds in the transformed timbre of the organ. Once angelic, it is now thunderous and strident. Overtones chaotically smash in to one another as the organ rings at full volume. The timbre is a stand-in for what Hyde is figuratively, it is what manifests when one "pulls out all the stops."

[18] Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 64.

The Piano: Feigning Human in *Dracula's Daughter*

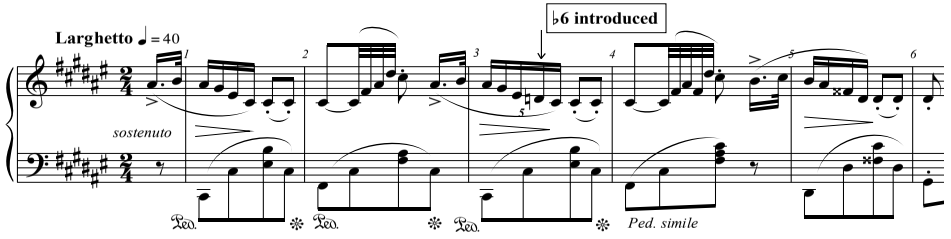
The organ performances in Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, then, acousticonically reveal the doctor's inner monstrosity both through cadences as well as through the manipulation of the timbre of the organ. In contrast to Hyde, Jekyll's fiancé, Muriel, acts as a musical foil. Instead of the organ, Muriel plays the piano, whose timbre suggests a civilized humanity in comparison to Jekyll's performance. Near the end of the film, she plays a selection from Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*. Jekyll enters shortly after and, no longer able to control his identity, he breaks off the engagement. As Muriel sits weeping at the piano, he again transforms into Hyde and proceeds to attack her and the civilized humanity she stands for.

The film suggests that the piano can act as a sonic skin of humanity in contrast to the monstrous skin of the organ. But the piano's humanistic element can also deceive where monsters play it in an attempt to hide their monstrous features, as is the case in the 1936 film *Dracula's Daughter*, where the Countess Dracula plays the piano in an attempt to prove herself un-monstrous. The film tells the tragic story of Countess Marya Zaleska (Gloria Holden), who, in an attempt to lift the curse of her father, Count Dracula, burns his corpse in an occult ritual. That night she declares to her servant, Sandor (Irving Pichel), that she is now free, "free to live as a woman. Free to take my place in the bright world of the living…instead of among the shadows of the dead." Sandor, however, remains unconvinced of the Countess's convictions and an uneasy air builds between them. Their quarrel escalates on the following night as the two engage in a hermeneutic duel. The Countess hopes to demonstrate her "normalcy" to Sandor by performing "normal music," Chopin's Nocturne in F# Major, as seen in Figure 2.4 and Example 2.3. As she plays she recalls her childhood memories to him: the music reminds her of her mother's lullabies, the shadows on the hillside, the birds in the trees, and distant barking dogs.

But Sandor responds with his own interpretive twists: the shadows are evil, the birds are bats, and the dogs bark at roaming wolves. When he claims that the music she plays is music of the dark, the Countess finally concedes that her vampiric curse still consumes her. In this moment of realization the sound track almost imperceptibly dissolves into a nondiegetic space. Once in this new space, the piano becomes more agitated, featuring dotted rhythms and chromatic passagework that forces the pianist to slowly move into a higher register. These qualities help build tension while a pronounced reverb gives the new piano sound a ghost-like quality. An orchestra washes out the sound of the piano, completing the transition from diegetic to nondiegetic. In a state of severe anxiety, the Countess cries out three times for Sandor and the music to stop.

Figure 2.4: The Countess plays for Sandor

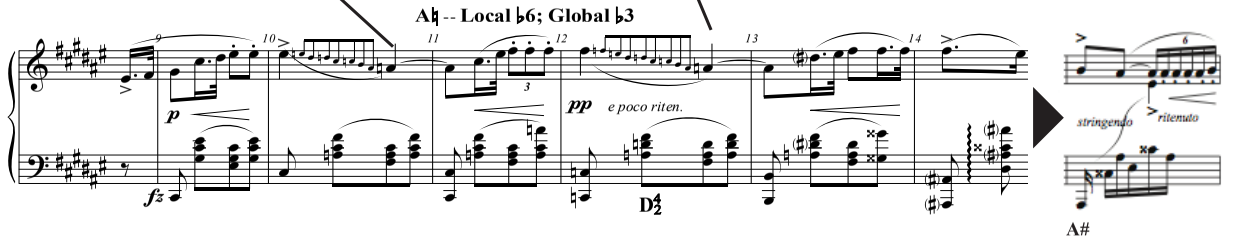
Part 1: "Normal Music"

Narrative Lvl *Diegetic*		Piano →
Nondiegetic		
Dialogue *Marya:*	I can live a normal life now... think normal things...even play normal music again. Listen!	Your cradlesong. A song my mother used to sing me a long, long time ago. Rocking me to sleep as she sang in the **twilight**. Quiet. Quiet, you'll disturb me.
Sandor:		(whispered) *twilight.*
Music		 mm. 1-5 . . .
Key Structure		**F#: I**

Example 2.3 Graph of the Countess' performance

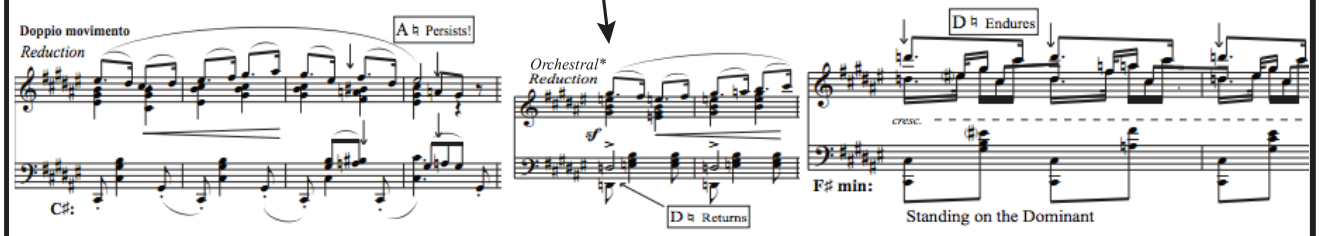
Example 2.3 Continued

Part 2: The Struggle

Narrative Lvl *Diegetic*	Piano →
Nondiegetic	
Dialogue *Marya:*	Twilight... Long shadows on the hillsides. / No. No, peaceful shadows. / The flutter of wings in the treetops. / No. No, the wings of birds. / From far off the barking of a dog. / Silence! I forbid you.
Sandor:	*Evil Shadows.* / *The wings of bats* / *Barking because there are wolves about.* / *Forbid!?*
Music	 . . . mm. 9-14 . . . m. 16 . . .
Key Structure	(Tonicization: V) **III**

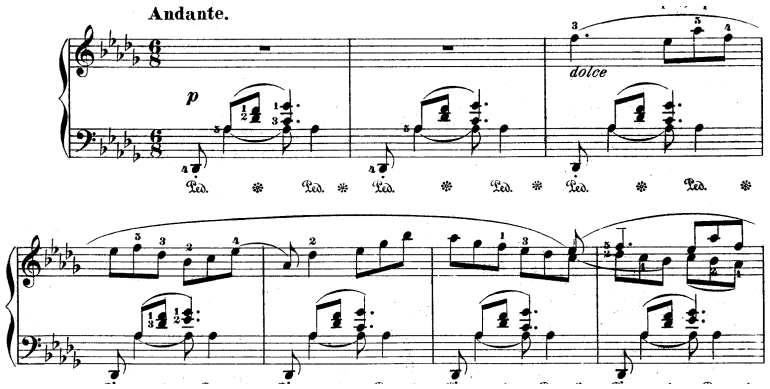
Example 2.3 Continued

Part 3: Resignation

Narrative Lvl *Diegetic*	Piano →
Nondiegetic	Orchestra →
Dialogue *Marya:*	I'm not I found release. / No, you're right! / Stop. Stop! STOP!
Sandor:	*Why are you afraid?* / *That music doesn't speak of release.* / *That music tells of the dark. Evil things. Shadowy places.*
Music	
	mm. 17-20 ... / mm. 25-26 ... / m. 31-32
	D pedal cont. → C-sharp pedal
Key Structure	(Tonicization: V / VII) / i

** The orchestral score heard is an orchestration of the Chopin Nocturne.*

Although the piano timbre suggests normalcy, monstrosity imbues the music, almost immediately casting a shadow of doubt on the Countess's purported normalcy. She claims she plays a cradlesong that her mother used to sing to her. The opening measures might indeed be mistaken for a lullaby. It has the delicate volume characteristic of the genre as well as the simple harmonic structure: an oscillation between Tonic and Dominant harmonies. However, Chopin only wrote one "cradlesong," his Op. 57 Berceuse in D♭ Major. The difference between the two pieces is immediately evident. In the berceuse, Example 2.4, the accompaniment pattern has a lilting rhythm evocative of cradle rocking noticeably lacking in the Countess's performance. The piece the Countess plays is a Nocturne: Chopin's Nocturne in F# major Op. 15, no. 2.



Example 2.4: Opening measures to Chopin's Berceuse in D♭ Major

Marya betrays this fact in her reference to twilight, a blunder Sandor immediately latches onto, echoing her very words. Thus begins Sandor's chain of interpretive twists that finally undo the Countess. The music echoes Sandor's logic, betraying the hollowness of the Countess's claim of normalcy. To use her own metaphor, it suggests that, among "the bright world of the living," there remains the shadow world of the dead. Here, the living/dead binary manifests in a juxtaposition of major/minor scale degrees. As seen in Example 2.3, in the third measure, the lowered sixth scale degree, D♮, appears in the melody. Its presence is fleeting, sounding in the

middle of a downward flourish, but the note nevertheless sticks out, a chromatic blemish in an otherwise masterfully woven harmonic skin of normalcy. The aberrant augmented second that results from the lowered sixth scale degree brings to mind what Michael Klein calls "the strange note," part of a 19th-century code that signifies the uncanny. Measure 3 is the first in a series of uncanny events that suggest what Klein defines as a *narrative of the uncanny*, whereby a repressed pitch *recurs*, bringing the strange note's earlier uncanny effect to a new layer of intensity.[19] The D♮ in the Countess' performance occurs three times in all, each more dramatic than the last.

In addition to measure 3, the D occurs in measure 12 as the root of a D^7 chord and then again in measures 25-32 as a pedal. In the first instance, which starts the B section, the D is preceded in measures 9-12 by a stubborn A♮ in the melody that globally functions as ♭$\hat{3}$ and locally ♭$\hat{6}$. The melody attempts to establish the dominant key, C#, but continues to fall chromatically to the A♮. As it does so, the dominant pedal, C#, slips down to C♮, the seventh in an unexpected D^7 chord. The passage echoes the simultaneous arguments of Countess Marya and Sandor: as she attempts to establish her normalcy, Sandor undermines each one of her claims. This subversion shakes both Marya's viewpoint and the passage's diatonic foundations; in order to recover the piece settles in the mediant key, A# major. While many of Chopin's works use the mediant key to transition from tonic to dominant, here it marks the failure of a B section, which now restarts tonicizing the dominant, C# major, both reinforcing its stability through a C# pedal and its function as a dominant seventh chord of F#. The Countess realizes the horror she has repressed all along: she is still a vampire. The music mimics her realization in the use of the

[19] Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indianapolis University Press, 2005), 88.

uncanny narrative, dramatically conjuring the D♮ back, this time as the seventh in a major-minor E^7 chord, the dominant seventh of the once repelled lowered mediant, A major. It appears concurrently with the Countess's verbal admission of her monstrous identity. And, when the E^7 makes the uncanny shift back to C# major, the repressed D♮ sings through now in the uppermost register, as an appoggiatura to the C# dominant-seventh chord and echoing the Countess's cries with its intense, desperate sighs. In summary, the music tells a narrative of the uncanny through the initial appearance of a strange note, its repression, and its final, dramatic return. That uncanny narrative mimics the diegetic argument between Countess Marya and Sandor: the Countess, believing herself transformed to human after the death of her father, represses the truth of her supernatural identity, only to realize distraughtly that her vampirism still consumes her.

Though *Dracula's Daughter* uses the piano as a synthetic, human skin in contrast to the bombastic organ in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the music performed has one common feature. The use of the lowered sixth scale degree, ♭$\hat{6}$, is ubiquitous in all three performances. In the first performance, Dr. Jekyll rewrites a deceptive cadence as an imperfect authentic cadence, only to have ♭$\hat{6}$ later dominate his second performance. In *Dracula's Daughter* it acts as a marker of the Countess' supernatural vampirism in an uncanny, musical narrative. As Richard Taruskin and, more recently, Richard Cohn have both shown, ♭$\hat{6}$ marked the uncanny and the supernatural in the 19th-century music through conventional meaning and opposition to the leading tonal relation of the period: tonic and dominant.[20] This tradition continues into 20th-century sound film, as my examples attest. But in addition to these traditional musical signs of the uncanny, the film medium affords yet another layer of musical meaning through the

[20] Richard Cohn, "As Wonderful as Star Clusters: Instruments for Gazing at Tonality in Schubert," *19th-Century Music* 22, no. 3 (1999): 213-232; Richard Taruskin, "Chernomor to Kaschei: Harmonic Sorcery; Or, Stravinsky's 'Angle,'" *Journal of American Musicological Society* 38, no. 1 (1985): 72-142.

transgression of the fantastical gap, the liminal space between diegetic and nondiegetic space.[21] In *Jekyll and Hyde* the second organ performance floods the entire space of the sound track. Like the transgressive hides of so many classic horror monsters, it bursts forth from the diegetic space into the nondiegetic in contrast to the opening performance where, like the famous point-of-view shot, the music is contained within. *Dracula's Daughter* takes on a metaphor of vampirism. The tantalizing sounds of the monstrous begin in a normative, diegetic space, but Sandor's reasoning punctures Marya's fantasy, and just like her fate the music slips out of her hands, bleeding from diegetic space to the nondiegetic.

As Julie Brown also notes, this transgression of the diegetic/nondiegetic gap, especially in horror film, brings about another aspect of the uncanny,[22] which according to Freud arises from "the doubt whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate."[23] In other words, the transgression between diegetic and nondiegetic here brings the haunting power of the ghostly, filmic image to life. Through conventional film codes of diegesis and synchronization, what we assumed was emanating from the Countess's hands at the piano was in fact always disembodied, always a phantom of the sound track. That same logic applies to the quasi-diegetic/nondiegetic space that Jekyll's organ operates within. In fact, sound on film is itself uncanny. Robert Spadoni points out that although early films like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* lacked musical content, they heavily relied on the uncanny power of sound to de-familiarize the already familiar experience of silent film practice for contemporary audiences. For these early sound film audiences, the uncanny resided in the

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[21] Stilwell, "Fantastical Gap."
[22] Brown, "Organs," 19.
[23] Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche" (1919) "The Uncanny," trans. by Alix Strachey in *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers, Vol. 4* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 5.

audiovisual image of the human body. "This figure could seem ghostly…a perception founded on the return to the foreground of general viewer awareness of cinema's artificial nature."[24] It is not unreasonable that this same uncanniness exists in Mamoulian's film, and also extends five years later, specifically to the transgression of the fantastical gap in *Dracula's Daughter*.

However, the fantastical gap not only reveals the Countess as still supernatural, it also locates her in a larger power structure, that of patriarchal representations of women. The countess might be monstrous, but she is also feminine; the power she metaphorically yields in her ability to represent herself through song is dangerous. Heather Laing asserts as much in her book, *Gendering the Score*, where she explores musical representations of women in 1940s melodrama. She notes that if a woman does indeed gain the ability to represent herself, this power must be mitigated by society's dominant patriarchal structure.[25] In the case of *Dracula's Daughter*, the Countess has only brief access to her own representation. Indeed, what was once calm, melodious music mutates into tense hysteria in a masculine-controlled, nondiegetic space. Sandor, even though he is supposed to be subordinate to his master, acts here as the male bearer of truth, pointing out the illogical nature of her assertions at every turn. Her shouts at the music to stop, then, are not so much a powerful command as a desperate plea, before her submission to the fate that awaits her.

Thus, the lowered submediant and the transgression of the fantastical gap do intensify uncanniness in each film, but they also create a sense of traversing interior and exterior space. The lowered submediant, $\flat\hat{6}$, offers a traversing of tonal space; it eschews the typified dominant

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[24] Robert Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 6.
[25] Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 9-24.

for a symbolically marked interior space. The emergence from diegetic to nondiegetic, or the ambiguity of the space, suggests the "interior" and "exterior" of the diegesis. In *Dracula's Daughter*, the fantastical gap gives the impression that the music emanates from the Countess. The film uses a foregrounded space in the sound track and a higher fidelity of sound to communicate its creation of an interior space.

Much like the modal tonal spaces explored in Chopinesque music practiced from an inherited Romantic era, so too it is performed as parlor music. Or better yet, as a Schubertiade, so popular in the late 19th century. Unlike the bawdy concert halls of the early 18th century, a 19th-century listening practice was defined by its directness to the individual.[26] In short, the film utilizes two Romantic practices, one of composition and one of listening, in its acousticonic formation of a space of the interior. The privatized acoustic space Jonathan Sterne discusses in *The Audible Past* is one such legacy of the shift in middle-class listening practices.[27] Concerts became ever quieter and halls ever darker so audiences could focus on the intricacies of the music. In America patrons began to record their experiences in diaries to recall and reminisce.[28] This intricate, intimate listening was also realized in sound recording technology for the individual. Of course, this practice did not do away with audiences. Indeed, film houses were full of strangers, and in homes people gathered around the radio as a family, but they no longer listened in full collectivity: they "listened alone together."[29]

In addition to evoking the privatized acoustic space of acousticonic internal sound, the film *Dracula's Daughter* partakes in a particular type of gendered image: the emotional woman.

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[26] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[27] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
[28] Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middeltown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).
[29] Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 177.

Heather Laing considers, broadly, Woman's films of the 1940s and early 1950s, showing that in inheriting theatrical and operatic codes from prior centuries, they present a conventionalized image of the emotional woman through the use of extended close-ups on a character's changing facial expression paired with expressive, nondiegetic music.[30] Notably, the music by itself does not signal this feminine turn inward. In fact, emotional, nondiegetic music often underscores action. It is not uncommon for emotional music, for example, to underscore heroic deeds (i.e. soldiers storming a beach or a football player scoring the winning touchdown). In such sequences music may express inner disposition, but it does not interfere with the character performing his or her duty.[31] In presenting the Countess in a long close-up after the music has been stripped from her hands, *Dracula's Daughter* partakes in a patriarchal construction of the emotional woman.

HEADPHONE SOUNDS OF THE INTERIOR

Returning briefly to *Apocalypse Now* and *Saving Private Ryan*, remember that these images, too, focus not on action but trauma. The opening juxtaposition of the jungle with Captain Willard's face has its roots in this feminine image. The audiovisual image of the inward turn also works, briefly, in *Saving Private Ryan*, as the Captain is briefly incapacitated and can only look around him in confusion until his senses recover. There are, of course, two main factors that have shifted between *Dracula's Daughter* and these war films. First, the subject positions are not occupied by women, but by men. Second, what those men hear is not music, but sound.

[30] Heather Laing, *The Gendered Score,* 141.
[31] Ibid., 141.

However, the origins of the turn inward as feminine and as a place of potential instability have a key effect on how the current image of the traumatized male turning inward is constructed.

Laing presents a strong historical basis for the audiovisual image of the feminine inward turn. However, she also notes that this image was, particularly in the 1950s more frequently mapped onto men, especially those coming of age. This image, a close up of the face, paired with a musical image of so-called "emotional music" effectively acts as a sign of emasculation. She notes in her examples, which span *East of Eden* (1955) to *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), the eschewing of tonal harmony as underscoring in favor of an unstable atonality for the underscored music. Instead of subverting tonal normativity, such music represents instability by unraveling the symbolic virtuality of the musical subject. Laing focuses her scope on films of the 1940s and 1950s, but I would contend that this veritable push of music into the unraveling of the subject continued from the realm of "musical noise," in the form of atonality, to noise itself.

The following section moves from musical and sonic acousticons that bring monstrous interiors to the exterior in classic horror film to a different but related sonic interior. I consider how this version of the emasculated man was constructed through a specific type of internal sound, which I will call head sound. However, unlike the physically and psychologically traumatized war subjects addressed above, here I will examine examples of men who suffer from socially distorted selves. Specifically I consider gendered implications of characters who wear headphones. In the case of both men and women, headphone sound is used to regulate normative gender identities. Frequently, male filmic characters who wear headphones appear as damaged individuals whose headphone sound marks their flawed interiors. While men listening to headphones are typically represented as emasculated, women are represented differently. The headphone-wearing woman is marked by a secret: what she listens to is never fully audible but

its sexual power evidently plays out on her body. This sort of half-heard, half-concealed sound I call "sonic leakage." Contrasting the visually active, sonically surreptitious woman in headphones is the visually static, inner resonant man wearing headphones. His interior resonates in a quasi-diegetic/nondiegetic space of head sound. However leakage for men in headphones serves as a contrast, an acousticonic metaphor for the dissonance between the outside world and the psychic interior. Thus men in headphones sound with both head sound *and* sonic leakage as way of sonically representing his detachment from the world around him.

Headphone sound as an audiovisual image makes this confusion tangible in the audible dissonance between the foregrounded, high quality sound of the character's inner world and that of social reality. This trope of headphone sound representing men appears in several contemporary films and television shows as a marker of emasculation of other man-boy protagonists like Tom Hansen (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) in *500 Days of Summer* (2009), Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix) in *Her* (2013), Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff) in *Garden State* (2004), Duncan (Liam James) in *The Way, Way Back* (2013), Pete Campbell (Vincent Kartheiser) in *Mad Men* (2007-), Silas Botwin (Hunter Parrish) in *Weeds* (2005-2012), and A.J. Soprano (Robert Iler) in *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) to name a few. In film, the figure exists at least as early as *The Graduate* (1967) in the audiovisual image of Benjamin Braddock's (Dustin Hoffman) scuba suit—a college graduation gift from his father. At a graduation party his parents throw in his honor, Ben's father humiliates his son by forcing Ben to model the new suit to his friends and business partners (Figure 2.5). In a point-of-view shot Ben watches the crowd cheer him on as he slowly makes his way towards the family swimming pool (Figure 2.6). He jumps in and slowly sinks to the bottom where he gazes upwards at the distorted reflections of the crowd. The scuba suit separates him from the party guests, but also stands in for Ben's own social

isolation, arising from his ambivalent sense of purpose post-graduation. What makes the scuba suit distinctive is its inexplicably isolated sound world.[32] While Ben can see partygoers cheering and clapping, they visually exist right in front of him, he cannot hear them — they might as well be ten thousand miles away. The world of sociability is inaccessible to Ben in his newly acquired suit. It is as if the gift of his father, transports him into a world of silence.[33]

Figure 2.5: Ben Braddock's Scuba Suit

[32] Inexplicable in that moments earlier Ben is clearly having a conversation through a shut door with his father, but as soon as the camera enters the suit all sounds outside it go silent.

[33] This silence offers more evidence for Chion's claim that cinema is a "palimstetic art" in which film reveals its half-buried, silent origins. For more on sound film as a "palimstetic art" see "On a Sequence from *The Birds:* Sound Film as Palimsestic Art," *Film, A Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (NY: Columbia University, 2009), 162-185.

Figure 2.6: A POV and POA shot from Ben's perspective in the suit

The conventional man-wearing-headphone image parallels Ben Braddock's man-wearing-scuba-suit, where there is a distinct incongruity between an internalized understanding of self and the outer social world, an image that manifests sonically in the form of head sound. Head sound, as opposed to sound leakage, is defined by its refined, high fidelity sound quality and its foregrounded place in the sound track. For Ben this first takes form in his mediated breathing and later is rendered as nondiegetic music; for men in headphones it takes form in an internalized, sonic space. Head sound represents internalization as narrative focalization by placing the POA within the head space of a character, presumably allowing the audience to hear what the character hears. While sound leakage defines the sexualized female, portrayals of men wearing headphones rely heavily on a combination of head sound and sound leakage. In doing so, a tangible distinction between the male character's internal self and the diegetic world that surrounds him becomes perceptible through a marked difference in sound worlds, a difference that ultimately acts to emasculate. While head sound is an aural representation of a character's inner experience, sound leakage often depicts a character's experience through external mediation. For female characters, this externalization locates the focalization as an exterior rather

than an interior. In other words, it emphasizes what music does to their bodies rather than their subjectivities.[34]

The rest of this section breaks down into two parts, each of which investigates the relationship between headphone sound and gender. First I focus on how headphone sound, through acousticons of head sound and sonic leakage, has come to signify the arrested development of a male character. Ultimately, headphone sounds in these scenarios work to amplify the social flaws that designate the character's masculinity as non-ideal, through the juxtaposition of head sound and leakage. The second part considers female headphone listening that portrays the woman as confessor of pleasure. Both images are conventional constructions that fit into a patriarchal regulation of normative gender identities, which mark these headphone spaces as mostly negatively detached. However, they are coded negatively for different reasons. Women listening to headphones are dangerously tapping into an inner desire marked as insatiable whereas men's overindulgence in listening threatens their ability to function socially as ideal men in contemporary society.

HEAD SOUND: MEN, HIGH FIDELITY, AND THE PLAYBOY

Emasculation, Inner Trauma, and the Classic Hollywood Model

The typical audiovisual image of the "man-listening-to-headphones" in film is somewhat of a paradox. The image is paradoxical because, as I have noted above, it codes a masculine figure performing a traditionally feminine-coded activity: emotional introspection. The

[34] This is not to suggest that these are the only way headphone sounds function in film, or even the only way they can represent aspects of the character's identity, but they are the exemplars, and it is worth asking why. Such an inquiry will show how each sound image functions while at the same time reveal the sorts of dominant ideological underpinnings they promote. That said, more research is needed in investigating subversive uses of these headphone acousticons. One possible example exists in Lynne Ramsay's film *Morvern Callar* (2002) about a young, Scottish woman who finds solace in her iPod after her boyfriend's suicide. For more, see Liza Johnson, "Perverse Angle: Feminist Film, Queer Film, Shame," in *Signs* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 1361-1384.

headphone wearer listens rather than acts. His turn inward to emotion rather than outward to action has ties to classic Hollywood's framing of the feminine. The inward searching, outward acting subject does occasionally, although rarely, appears wearing a set of headphones. In such scenarios headphones may endow the listener with superhuman power. They act as prosthetic, enhancing his physical capacity, like François Toulour's (Vincent Cassel) break-dance infused burglary in *Ocean's Twelve* (2004), or his mental capacity, like Paul Smecker's (Willem Dafoe) reconstruction of a crime scene with the help of his iPod in *The Boondock Saints* (1999). The head set, especially in action films like the *Bourne* trilogy, falls into a similar category of superhuman prosthetic.

Headphones as empowering prosthetic, however, are much less common than headphones as emasculating barrier. While the former attunes its user to the surrounding environment, the latter tends to isolate the user from that same environment. As such, the distinction between headphones as empowering prosthetic and emasculating barrier must be made audiovisually. The lengthy close-up shot of the emasculated male emphasizes his shifting facial expressions, blank eyes, and or static, slumped bodies while the accompanying music suggests inner emotion.[35] The typical representation of the man wearing headphones parallels this image. He sits with eyes fixed off in the distance, unaware of his surroundings. His mental focus blinds his physical awareness in that the music transports him away from reality. His social imperfections not only play out in the narrative, but are also embodied in the acoustical dissonance and audible distance between his self-created sound world, as signified through head sound and the sound of the diegetic world that surrounds him. This audiovisual image, then,

[35] Laing, *The Gendered Score*, 9-24.

represents an incomplete man who, in order to become the ideal, needs to unplug from his self and return to society. In short, he is in need of reforming.

Consider, for example, the opening sequence from *High Fidelity* (2000). The film centers on Rob Gordon (John Cusack), a self-proclaimed music savant and record storeowner who struggles to mend his relationship with his girlfriend, Laura (Iben Hjeje). The film opens with the sound track in full foreground over the production logo: a raw crackle of a turntable needle shortly followed by wailing vocals and the psychedelic sounds of the 1960s rock band, *The 13th Floor Elevators*. When the image track fades, in it reveals a spinning record before quickly cutting to a sound system with a single cord in the headphone jack. Following this lone cable, the camera reveals a pair of headphones wrapped around Rob's head, as seen in Figure 2.7. In this

Figure 2.7: Rob in his headphones

close-up shot Rob sits hunched over with his back to the screen. As the camera pans from the music's origin to its point of emanation, so does the song, "You're Gonna Miss Me Babe," fade from the foreground to the background of the sound track, effectively moving from head sound to leakage. The shift away from Rob's head space prepares the sound track for the dialogue that follows, but it also symbolically functions to portray Rob's separation from his surroundings.

This representation of leakage brings to the fore the social/subjective conflict that a dominant mode of headphone acousticonography embodies. On the one hand, headphones signal the autonomy of self through sonic cohesion while on the other a complete immersion in one's own sound world consequently necessitates a disengagement from the social.[36] It is this inward reflection and focus on emotion rather than outward action that emasculates Rob. Rob's following testimony, "What came first, the music or the misery?...Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable, or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?," reinforces the sonic signification of the inward turn. Rob uses his music to soundtrack his gloom, an emotion that is fresh due to the fact that Laura has just broken up with him. Laura, who is still in the apartment, has to physically pull out Rob's headphones in order to engage him in conversation, just as she must metaphorically pull Rob out of his state of arrested development by the end of the film, compelling him to pursue his dream career in the music industry. Ideologically, the film's lesson locates Rob's inability to disengage with his inner self as a deficient trait that he must reform in order to achieve proper masculinity, which he accomplishes with the help of Laura.

As a film that focuses on an emasculated headphone-wearer, *High Fidelity* could be read as a variant of the "talking cure" film. The talking cure narrative typically centers on the restoration of a character's traumatized subjectivity, most often through therapy. Talking cure films traditionally center around women, but those that focus on men emerged during and immediately following World War II, and typically feature men who suffer from some sort of

[36] As Michael Bull observes, this framing of isolation is not unlike that of the filmgoers' film experience, *Sounding Out the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life*, (New York: Berg, 2000), 93.

war trauma.[37] And while differences exist, music functioned to inspire compassion for the male character while it was meant to feign emotional experience for the female character.[38] Futhermore, men's music tends towards the modern sounds of atonality and/or electronic instrumentation while women's music often tends towards simpler melodies and diatonicism.[39] Both musical types convey a loss of agential control of the self due to overwhelming emotion.

In 1940s talking cure films, veterans are often scarred subjects, but traumatized men still appear outside the realm of war films and become more and more prevalent over the following decade. Such trauma could spur from childhood events, as is the case in *Spellbound* (1945), or familial matters, like the inadequate parenting in *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955).[40] In each case the character's trauma keeps him from fulfilling his "proper" social role as a man.[41] The classic Hollywood image of the traumatized male holds something in common with the image of the headphone-wearing man. Both utilize the conventionalized "emotional woman" image as a means of representing masculine lack. However, traumatized men and headphone-wearing men tend to differ in both type and degree of their deficiencies. First, the traditional damaged self suffers from an acute trauma, and is frequently unable to function in society, while the headphone wearing man is not so much traumatized, but rather he is either unable to fulfill his responsibilities as a man or else has elected to reject them. Though *High Fidelity* spends a lot of time dredging through Rob's past relationships, none are as traumatizing as Captain Willard's

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[37] These cure films portray trauma differently, depending on the gender of the character. For the war veteran, trauma manifests as a specific issue or event that only partly defines a man's subjectivity, while the entirety of the woman's self is at stake in feminine trauma. But what the two types have in common is their depiction: the extended close-up accompanied by non-diegetic music. For more on trauma and gender, see Mary Ann Doane *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1987), 47.

[38] Laing, *The Gendered Score,* 141.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 142-143.

[41] Ibid. 143-144. Laing mentions a particularly interesting example in *East of Eden* (1955), where the Cal's (James Dean) romantic relationship is marked by a "return" to tonality.

experiences in *Apocalypse Now*. Instead, the process reveals how little Rob's approach to relationships has progressed in his adult life. This lack of change highlights Rob's inability—and it is portrayed as an inability rather than a refusal—to accept the responsibility society asks of him. Secondly, while the traumatized subjectivity traditionally centers on a psychological problem, the contemporary character's deficiency manifests as a social deficiency. Unlike the clinical healing through psychoanalysis prevalent in talking cure films, it is the people from Rob's everyday life who take an active role in his reformation.[42]

500 Days of Summer provides another particularly noteworthy example of the emasculated man-boy protagonist. The film follows Tom, a greeting card writer (though he's college trained to be an architect), as he meets, dates, and finally loses the girl of his dreams, Summer (Zooey Deschanel). Though generally a smart fellow and genuine person, Tom has deluded himself into thinking that his success as a person hinges upon finding his perfect romantic match. He projects this image on to Summer, who, while attracted to Tom, does not want a serious relationship. Though she says as much to him, he seems not to register her desires. Tom's distortion is apparent from the first time he meets Summer; he is immediately enamored of her after seeing her around the office. A connection between Tom and Summer finally occurs in an elevator as she overhears The Smiths' "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out" leaking from his headphones (Figure 2.8). She asks Tom what he is listening to, prompting him to lower

[42] Of course the primary distinction of professional versus relationship-based healing does not mean that headphones can never represent or have never represented psychological trauma. For instance, in *Reign Over Me* (2007), the main character Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler), is a New Yorker whose wife and children perished in the September 11th attacks. He uses headphones as a way of separating himself from society, a society that constantly reminds him of his loss. Unlike Rob in *High Fidelity*, whose headphone wearing is limited to one scene, Charlie's headphones are a constant feature, to the point that getting him to remove them marks a significant success in his therapy sessions. *The King's Speech* (2011) is another film that features headphones in a clinical setting where headphones are used in speech therapy as a way of curing the debilitating speech impediment of King George VI (Colin Firth). Here, his therapist applies headphones as a way of separating out the dissonance between the King's experience of inner and outer worlds.

his headphones and, consequently, open his sound world to her. “The Smiths,” she says, “I love The Smiths,” before proceeding to sing along. While the shared interest in the music from the headphones motivates their interaction, both Tom and Summer have different impressions of what the music “is.” Summer understands the similarity of musical preferences as merely a point that opens communication: it warrants small talk that might lead to something more, but it remains basically a happy coincidence not freighted with metaphysical significance. Tom, however, misreads the essence of the conversation and ultimately the totality of their subsequent relationship. He understands this music as a metonym of his subjectivity: the song gives sonic form to his identity, and in identifying the song Tom feels it is as if Summer has gazed into his inner soul. While the headphone sound here never transgresses from sound leakage to head sound it nevertheless fixates on Tom’s interior as indicated in his decision to remove his ear buds and open his sound world to Summer. Later that week, Tom tries to recreate the elevator scenario from his desk in the office. He meticulously watches Summer from across the room and waits for the right moment to start playing another Smith’s song, aptly named “Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want,” this time from his computer. The song starts diegetically at a low volume, but as Summer draws closer the image track shifts to Tom’s perspective and gradually slows while the music gains volume and fidelity, implying a shift to Tom’s head sound and suggesting a romantic meet. This meet, though implied, ultimately fails. In spite of all Tom’s calculations Summer walks by completely unaware of his presence. The intimate connection is revealed to exist only as part of Tom’s fantasy—purely within the confines of his head sound. Moreover, the film frames his perspective with romantic comedy conventions indicating that Tom has literally internalized these conventions as how one experiences love.

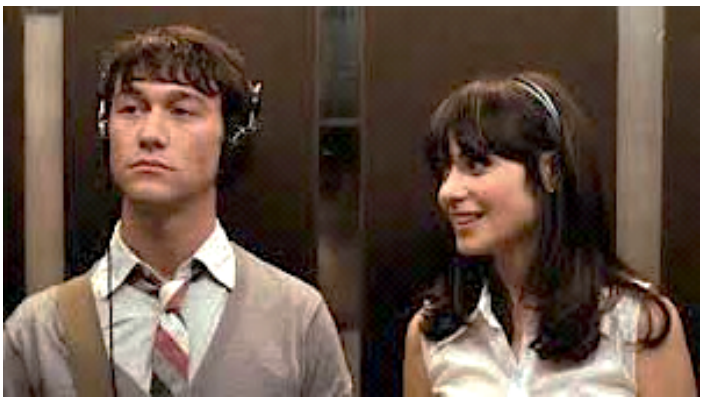

Figure 2.8a: Tom with his headphones on

Figure 2.8b: Tom Opening his sound world to Summer

Indeed, Tom's misreading anticipates his misunderstanding of his relationship with Summer as another scene using headphone sound indicates. Occurring after the breakup, Tom, riding a city bus, listens to "She's Like The Wind" with a pair of ear buds on the bus. The song acts as a sound advance over a black screen until Tom interrupts yelling, "I hate this song," at which point the music goes silent and the image track reveals that Tom on a crowded bus. The bus driver consequently expels Tom for his sudden outburst. Like Tom's misreading of his initial meet with Summer, headphone sound yet again makes apparent the distortion of Tom's fairy tale notion of love compared to that of the real world. Tom's declaration seems to be a cry for relief to a tormentor. And yet by the very individualized nature of headphones Tom must be his own

tormentor, though he does not seem to recognize this fact. The outburst and subsequent exile represents Tom's intense focus on a fantasy of the self, to the point where he can no longer identify his inner and outer boundaries. The song itself comes from a feature of the 1987 teen romance film *Dirty Dancing*, with a narrative that embodies a utopian notion of love, that Tom holds so dear. Indeed, just like Tom's "sad British pop music," and his romantic understanding of how lovers meet, Tom yet again gives his life meaning through material things. That he understands himself through things rather than *actions* is Tom's primary deception, or so the film would have us believe. And so the same holds true for Rob and his record collection and high fidelity equipment.

The Bachelor Playboy and High Fidelity Sound

In fact, it is the headphone-wearing man's status as immature and consumerist that links him to a different sort of masculinity than the traumatized male of classic Hollywood. Emerging in the 1950s and developed throughout the 1960s, the playboy bachelor would rise in opposition to the traditional masculine model. The playboy model touted sexual liberation, a re-gendering of domestic space, and for the consumption of fashionable clothing, culinary products, and especially quality sound equipment. Many men, both single and married, lionized the playboy while others, including, Hollywood, would attempt to contain it within the existing masculine framework of man as heterosexual breadwinner.[43] Around the same time, a shift in middle class living conditions would force a reassessment of existing gendered domestic space. As suburbia became the American norm, domestic space shifted from one of gendered separateness to familial togetherness, driving men and women to redefine traditional gendered space within the

[43] Steve Cohan, "The Bachelor in the Bedroom," in *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1997), 264-303.

home.[44] One way this was accomplished was through the gendering of high fidelity sound equipment as masculine, a space for married men to escape their families.[45] In film, both of these socio-cultural conditions and the reactions they caused would come to shape the audiovisual image of a sonically fixated man exhibiting arrested development.

Thus the man stuck in arrested development relates to a new masculinity that emerged in the post-war decades, particularly during the 1950s: the playboy bachelor. The playboy, at least in film representations, became a post-war manifestation of the maladjusted bachelor, "a glamorized 'bum' who personified some of the most deeply felt anxieties about male sexuality, anxieties which the era's domestic ideology tried to mask in its representations of the breadwinner as the norm of masculinity."[46] According to Stephen Cohan, sex comedies of the 1950s and 1960s like *Pillow Talk* (1959), coded the playboy bachelor as "immature," "irresponsible," and "latently homosexual," all of which were "primary symptom[s] of arrested development according to the standard (man as family breadwinner) of domestic ideology."[47] The flaws of the playboy bachelor, then, are deviations from dominant masculinity, and several films like *The Tender Trap* (1955), *The Apartment* (1960), and *Boys Night Out* (1962) work to transform the irresponsible, scandalously single playboy character into the responsible, unequivocally heterosexual married man, not unlike similar transformations of headphone-wearing men in contemporary film.

Take for example *Pillow Talk,* a sex comedy about a musician playboy, Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) and a virginal interior decorator, Jan Morrow (Doris Day), who share a party line in a

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[44] Keir Keightley, "'Turn It Down!' She Shrieked: Gender, Domesticity, and High Fidelity, 1948-1959," *Popular Music* 15, No. 2 (1996), 149-177.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Cohan, *Masked Men,* 267.
[47] Ibid., 267-268.

Manhattan neighborhood. A successful commercial musician, Brad romances women over the phone and in his apartment at all hours, much to Jan's dismay. The two argue over the phone several times, but when he finally sees Jan he decides to make a play for her. Her contempt for Brad prompts him to woo her under the guise of Rex Stenson, a visiting Texan who is all the things Brad is not. When Jan discovers Brad's deception, he hires her as an interior decorator as an attempt to reconcile their relationship. As retaliation, Jan redecorates the place tawdrily to reflect her opinion of Brad's character. After her revenge, the two make up and get married. Brad was a man who adamantly refuses the duties of dominant masculinity—at one point, he declares, "Before a man marries, he's like a tree in the forest…an entity unto himself…Then, he's chopped down [and] loses his branches and bark…when he comes out [of marriage] he's no longer a tree. He's the vanity table, the breakfast nook, the baby crib...." In this case, it takes the right woman to show him the error of his ways, to show him that for the right woman "you look forward to losing your branches." Just as Laura reforms Rob, Jan reforms Brad into the appropriate man-as-bread-winner. Whereas Laura "unplugs" Rob from himself, Jan redecorates Brad's "interior."

The playboy bachelor was not a creation of Hollywood film, but a product of the American cultural condition. Instead, film, as an institution, attempted to contain the new identity now running rampant through various cultural avenues, perhaps most notoriously in *Playboy* magazine. Though readership was low in its premier year, 1953, by 1958 the magazine became the top men's magazine, surpassing *Esquire*, and was second only to *The New Yorker* in high-income readers.[48] As a primary player in defining what women ought to be, particularly

[48] Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narrative, Postmodernism, and the Atomic* Age, (Durham: Duke University, 1995), 129-130.

defining them as consumable objects, *Playboy* was perhaps more invested in crafting the masculine identities of its readership.[49] And although notorious for its centerfolds, much of the magazine devoted itself to, albeit cheekily, the "sort of man" that reads the magazine. In the opening pages of the first volume, *Playboy* offers the following definition:

> We like our apartment. We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an *hors d'oeuvre* or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph, and inviting in a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzche, jazz, sex.[50]

Thus a playboy was a high-class sort who enjoyed the pleasures of life, drinking, appetizers, and high quality music. Particularly noteworthy is the shift of masculine performance from a public space, the office, to the feminine coded space of the home, here the bachelor "pad" or apartment. In a two-part article spanning two issues, *Playboy* meticulously lays out the ideal bachelor pad, which had its own space for hi-fi stereo equipment. For the bachelor, typical feminine spaces like the kitchen, which became a space where he could demonstrate his culinary prowess, and the living room, where he might show off his extensive record collection and top-of-the-line stereo equipment, were reinterpreted as arenas, public spaces where he might perform his playboy masculinity.[51] Perhaps the greatest ideological goal of the magazine's (re)definition of masculinity was to include the feminine-coded activity of consumerism. As Cohan asserts, much of *Playboy*'s ideology "wasn't to talk men out of leaving their families to return to bachelorhood, but instead 'to go shopping.'"[52] Much of Cohan's chapter focuses around this particular trait of bachelorhood as defined by *Playboy*'s discourse and its attempt to reframe a playboy's consumption habit as a sign of his virility, instead of the more traditional sign of femininity. As

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[49] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (NY: Routledge, 2004), 33-41.
[50] *Playboy*, January 1, 1953, 3, cited in Cohan, *Masked Men*, 271.
[51] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 271-274.
[52] Ibid., *Masked Men*, 270.

the magazine increased popularity year after year, so too did more companies advertise products that fit the playboy lifestyle, from luxury cars and vacation packages to record holders and cuff links. These advertisements are further reinforced by the various articles that make up the body of the publication on how to be a proper bachelor. There are regular articles on dress and fashion, as well as cooking recipes and cocktail quizzes.

Just as common as the monthly recipe and fashion features are articles that specifically address musical taste. According to *Playboy* magazines of the 1950s, what music bachelors listen to is a primary component in the construction of a successful playboy identity. Nearly every issue features an article discussing jazz, wirrten by regular contributors or else respected members of the jazz world. There are editorials on jazz musicians as well as articles written by the musicians themselves (e.g. Dave Brubeck). Advertisements include LP holders for the playboy wax collector, and good deals on LPs for both classical and jazz music. These advertisements were aimed at all classes of men.[53] While lower-class men may not have been well versed in classical and jazz music, they could learn to be, through *Playboy*. Indeed, the first full-paged advertisement is for LPs containing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony that *also* contains a set of guides to classical music as a means of teaching class affluence to its consumer.[54] Moreover, chances for education in musical taste were not limited to products for purchase. For example, in an article entitled "Collecting Jazz," from September 1955, columnist James Lavely gives his readers pointers on how to start a jazz record collection. He explains how record collectors, or "platterbugs," find their recordings, where they

[53] Nadel, *Containment Culture,* 133.
[54] Nadel, *Containment Culture*. 131.

buy them, and what they buy. He even includes a list of suggested records, "from Bunk to Monk," at the end of the article.[55]

Both Tom and Rob, then, have aspects of the playboy as consumer, though they lack the masculine playboy framework. As shown earlier in *500 Days of Summer*, Tom understands The Smiths as an intimate part of his self, along with other popular culture texts. The case is even more pronounced in *High Fidelity*, where Rob organizes his life through his record collection, an assortment arranged autobiographically by date of purchase. He stockpiles more music than anyone can listen to in a single lifetime, using music's materiality to give tangible form to his own identity—tactilely appealing in smooth, square packages, organized and contained within the confines of a shelf.[56] In one sequence, as seen in Figure 2.9, his records literally encase him, adding an extra wall of privacy within his apartment. From the very beginning, Rob's music collection and its placement within the sound track function as a manifestation of his identity, his memories, and his life experience. "What really matters is what you like, not what you are like," Rob remarks, "books, records, films – these things matter. Call me shallow but it's the fucking truth." The head sound in the opening sequence further symbolizes this identity through recording. First, Rob acts as his own disk jockey, meaning he controls the playlist to his own life.[57] By allowing Rob to "choose," the film represents him as mapping his individuality directly through his song choices. However, just as the dissonance between sound worlds signifies Rob's detachment from the world around him, the very first sound of the film, the fuzzy scratch of the drop of the record needle, draws attention to the recording's imperfection, or perhaps to Rob's

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[55] J. H. Lavely, "Collecting Jazz: About Discophiles, Their Records, and Starting a Collection of Their Own," *Playboy*, September 1954, 12.

[56] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1985), 32.

[57] Specifically, "on-the-air" sound highlights a character's unawareness of or indifference to the music playing in the scene. See Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, 482.

imperfection. Rob may have control over his own world, but the film suggests it is a world distorted through consumerism. Thus, like *Playboy's* bachelor, Rob defines himself through consumption, but notably without the playboy framework here, in the form of recordings. The film marks his masculinity as lacking, both through the narrative and through sound.

Example 2.9: Rob buffered by his album collection

However, even more so than what the playboy listens to, the playboy discourse concerns itself with how he listens, and a playboy bachelor listens with high fidelity audio equipment. The publications of the 1950s are flooded with hi-fi system advertisements, from top end products to do it yourself hi-fi kits. "*Playboy* After Hours," a section dedicated to reviewing various media and clubs, suggests what albums sound best in hi-fi and where the top hi-fi clubs can be found. Advertisements coax readers to buy their products for top-of-the-line, stereophonic listening. One advertisement states, "You wouldn't cover one ear at a concert,"[58] (Figure 2.10) while another boasts the first stereo recorded orchestra on LP, (Figure 2.11) stating the recording "creates a *depth* of sound in speaker to speaker counter lines without losing the *dynamic* values

[58] *Playboy*, January, 1959, 81.

of either line. This is a *true* stereo realism in dimension and *excitement*"[59] and, "*… a channel separation that puts you at the conductor's desk…volume controls become your baton*."[60] Even Lavely's article on collecting jazz spends a great deal of its word count on high fidelity sound. He weighs in on buying high fidelity equipment, offering brand suggestions, how to install your own system, and where to store it.[61] Thus in the articles, cartoons, and advertising that permeates *Playboy*, high fidelity takes a prominent place in helping to construct playboy masculinity. Notably, high fidelity as sound became as much if not more of an identity marker than the style of music itself.

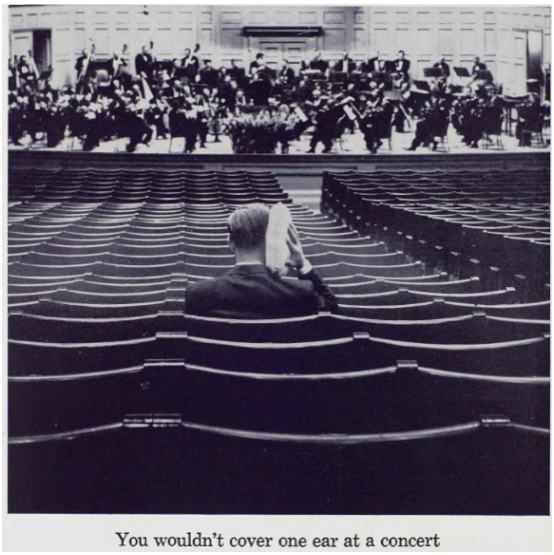

Figure 2.10: Part of an advertisement for full frequency stereophonic sound (ffss) in January 1959 edition of Playboy

[59] Ibid., 62 original emphasis
[60] Ibid., Original emphasis
[61] Lavely, "Collecting Jazz," 9-12.

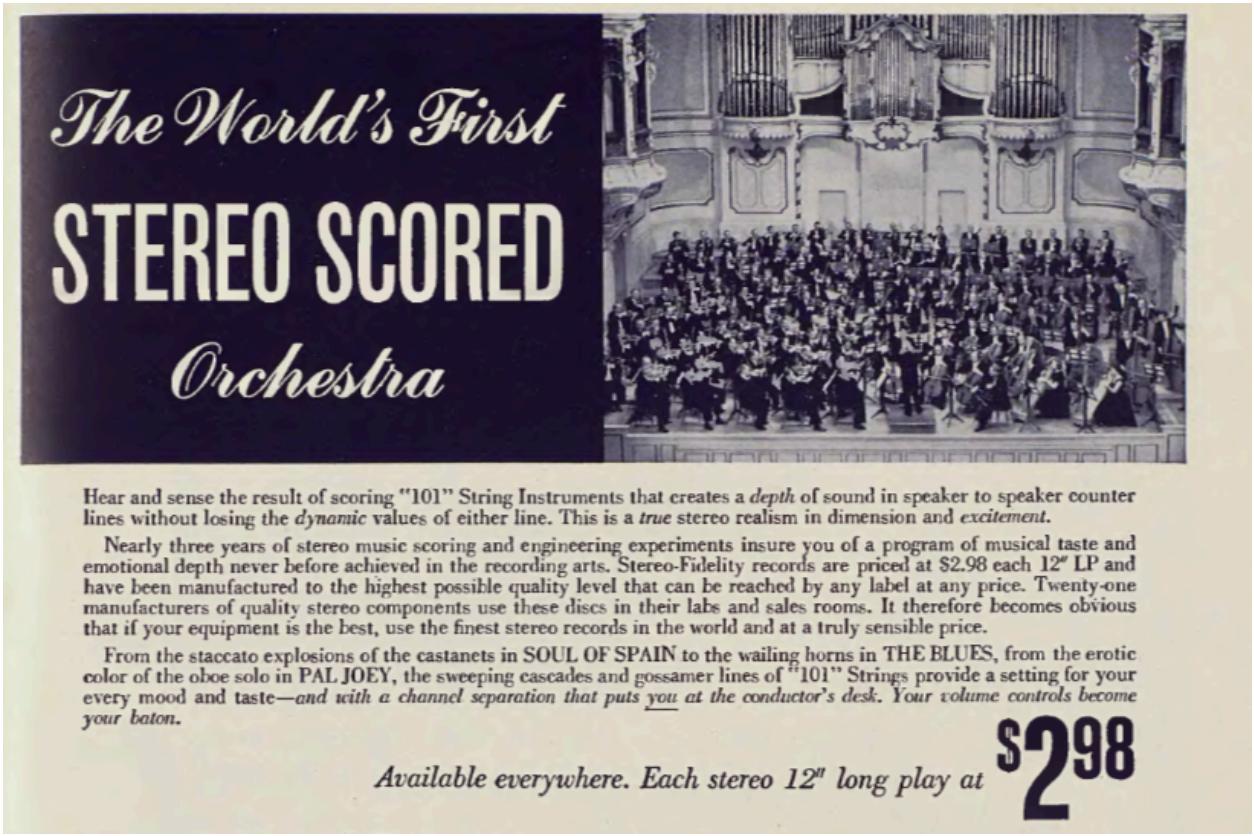

Figure 2.11: Advertisment for "101" Strings in Stereo in Playboy January, 1959

Of course, *Playboy* readership was not limited solely to bachelors during the 1950s, nor was high fidelity sound equipment limited to playboy apartments. Married men were as statistically likely to read the magazine as single men. Similarly, high fidelity equipment was not limited to the pages of *Playboy*; it appeared in various other magazines of the period, including *Lifetime* and *High Fidelity*, not to mention in newspapers, television shows, films, and radio programs. As Keightley has shown, high fidelity, alongside the LP record, emerged in various places in the 1950s as a means of defining masculine space within the white, middle class, suburban home.[62] Besides its cultural capital as a sign of class, hi-fi equipment offered men a family-free zone, sonically transporting its user out of familial space that directly opposed the

[62] Keightely, "Turn it Down."

television as representation of feminine space.[63] Crucially, this space was understood to transgress both the internal and external. As Keightley puts it, "the 'barriers' between the listener and the music are imagined to be, on the one hand, the physical body of the listener, which has been immersed and forgotten (eyes closed), and on the other, the walls of the domestic setting (which may be breached through mental transportation)."[64] And although this space usually came in the form of a physical room or speakers, it would occasionally be relegated to the virtual space accessible with headphones, which could only serve to intensify the immersive experience. Of course, excessive immersion and costly investments in overly luxurious equipment were seen as counter to a mid-century middle class culture defined by moderation. The man with the "golden ear" is compared to the *Man With the Golden Arm* (1955) in his ignoble addiction.[65]As such, these behaviors were seen as "'pathological' embrace of the extreme," that "position[ed] the male audiophile as an oblivious mutant, simultaneously inside and outside class norms."[66] In other words, by idolizing this internalized, yet transportative space one ran the risk of a sort of out-of-touchness with the middle class routine and thus possible alienation.

It is precisely this social faux pas that contemporary films featuring men in headphones evokes. The 1950s framing of high fidelity as an internalized space that transfers its listener outside domestic space matches the audiovisual image of the man transfixed in the sound of his own head, and the image of the excessively listening audiophile acts to bring the distortion of headphone wearer's overindulgence in this space. Crucially, this latter image opposes the classic

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[63] Keightley, "Low Television, High Fidelity: Taste and the Gendering of Home Entertainment Technologies," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47, No. 2 (2003): 236-259.
[64] Keightley, "Turn it Down," 170.
[65] Keightley, Ibid.,163. Golden ears, is a colloquial term used by audiophiles who have a knack for hearing. For more on contemporary audiophile culture, see Mark Perlman, "Golden Ears and Meter Readers: The Contest for Epistemic Authority in Audiophilia," *Social Studies of Science* 34, no. 5 (2004): 783-807.
[66] Keightley, "Turn it Down," 173.

Hollywood model, both in that it is seen as a social rather than psychological issue and that it exists as a somewhat accepted activity. That is, while it partly falls within the accepted practices of domestic masculinity, its overindulgence threatens to disrupt social relationships.

Thus, the headphone wearing man, as the representation of an emasculated man, relies on at least three forms of failed masculinity from the earlier twentieth century. His image is not unlike the traumatized men of classic Hollywood texts, in that they both feature emotional turns inward, as depicted through nondiegetic, emotional music, and extended shots of facial expression. However, the headphone wearer's plight is a social rather than psychological one, and almost always less devastating than that of the traumatized male. He is man who has not quite entered acceptable manhood, and in order to do so he must, like the playboy bachelor, find his heteronormative complement. Moreover, he understands himself through the things that he owns, particularly his music—another potential flaw that must be remedied. Finally, the image of the aloof audiophile exemplifies the headphone wearing man's cultural condition. In excessively indulging in his own sound world he runs the risk of social alienation, a fate that, while undesirable, holds a marginal position within American society. It is an image fixated on the interior and it contrasts rather conspicuously the outward focused image of the woman wearing headphones. While the film focused on the male headphone wearer typically offers a tale of redemption, the female tale is typically one of punishment for sexual indulgence. Most importantly, films with women in headphones portray them first and foremost as confessors.

SOUND LEAKAGE: WOMEN, SEXUALITY, AND THE CONFESSION

Written by Denis Diderot in 1748, *The Indiscreet Jewels* tells the tale of Mangogul, a sultan bored of life's usual pleasures. In the book, Mangogul summons a genie to grant him one

wish: a way to coerce women into telling him of their sexual adventures. After briefly protesting, the genie produces a small silver ring from his pocket that grants its owner the power to impel any woman he chooses to speak indiscreetly. "But," warns the genie, "do not imagine that they shall speak through their mouths…[instead they shall speak] from the most honest part of them, and the best instructed in the things you desire to know…from their jewels."[67] For Foucault, Diderot's novel functions as a powerful allusion to Western institutions of sexuality whose primary objective is the transformation of desire into discourse. By giving discourse the status of truth, a procedure of will-to-knowledge and power or, *scientia sexualis*, emerged in the West by the turn of the century. FOucault designates this mode of discourse the confessional. The confessional has a long history in the West, but at present it remains the dominant mode of sexual discourse in various valued social institutions.[68]

Linda Williams identifies cinema as an institution that participates in the confessional, specifically by representing the feminine body as sexually saturated through visual objectivity. Like Foucault, she too cites Diderot's "speaking jewels," but in connection with the history of pornographic film. While both scenarios feature female confessors, the filmic version of speaking jewels is a primarily visual confessional.[69] This form of the confession has its most prominent formulation in the representation of female orgasm in pornography, a genre that relies on maximum visibility as evidence of pleasure. As Dennis Giles puts it, pornographic film "is reputed to tell everything, show everything. It glories in detail, in extreme closeups of private

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[67] Denis Diderot, *The Indiscreet Jewels*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Marsilio Books, 1993), 96.
[68] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Random House, 1978), 63.
[69] This is one of Williams' main points about filmic discourse: the origin and development of cinema is tied up with various other "visual mechanisms" that began to appear in the 19th century, all which worked to intensify the visual and capture a vision previously unavailable to the human eye. See "Prehistory: The Frenzy of the Visible," in *Hard core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible*," (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 34-57.

places, forbidden acts. It is apparently naked but not ashamed, claiming to screen the bare truth of its chosen subject—the physical career of desire."[70]

And yet, while pornographic film purports to possess the magic of Mangogul's silver ring, it nevertheless falls short. This failure is at least in part due to the fact that it is primarily men who produce pornography for other men. And for men, sexual pleasure is verifiable in visually objective terms. Women's sexual pleasure, however, is internal and thus out of sight to the male spectator.[71] In hard-core, a genre meant to uncover the "truth" of sexual pleasure itself through the visible,[72] the invisibility of the female orgasm presents a significant impediment, one which it attempts to conceal through an excess of pleasure, or what Williams calls the "frenzy of the visible."[73] The frenzy of the visible includes revealing postures, body positions and close ups of women's facial expressions that allow for maximum visual exposure. These representations emphasize a loss of bodily control or, in short, disguise the unknown as involuntary confession. Crucially, the excessively visual feminine body as the embodiment of sexual pleasure does not just take form in pornography, but in film at large,[74] and dates back to the earliest cinematic representations of women.[75] A myriad of scholars note the sexual difference marked by cinematic discourse, perhaps most notably caught in Laura Mulvey's "looked-at-ness" and Berger's axiom "*men act, women appear*."[76] In other words, feminine

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[70] Dennis Giles, "Pornographic Space: The Other Place," in *1977 Film Studies Annual*, ed. Ben Lawton and Janet Staiger. (Pleasantville, NY: Redgrave Publishing, 1977),55.
[71] Ibid., 58.
[72] Williams, *Hard-core*, 49.
[73] Ibid., 49-50.
[74] Linda,Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer 1991), 4.
[75] Williams, *Hard-core*, 38-42.
[76] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema," in *Media and Cultural Studies*, eds. Meenasksi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 342-352; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972/2008).

sexual pleasure as both interior and unknowable maps onto a spectrum of representations of women in various film genres that serve as symbolic substitutions.[77]

Filmic representations of women in headphones provide an exemplar of this symbolic substitution as they make the internal boundaries of the female self explicit as well as mark that experience as a confidential one. Since filmgoers do not, and cannot, participate in the private musical experience, they must instead watch the pleasure as an over-the-top visible confession inscribed on the sexually saturated feminine body—a body possessed ostensibly by the power of Mangogul's ring and symbolized in the magical sounds radiating both into and out of the subject. Moreover, although this observation that cinematic displays of women listening to music are hypsersexualized may not in itself be surprising, that they employ a specific type of sonic representation, one that evokes confidentiality through acoustic filtering, is. This obstructed headphone sound, which I will refer to as sound leakage, is an overheard sound that, while emanating from a character's world, remains obscured and is consequently not fully accessible to others. As such, sound leakage and the sexually saturated feminine body combine to form the conventional, audiovisual sign for the headphone-wearing woman.

Though the audiovisual image of the headphone wearing man arises out of codes of feminization, depictions of women wearing headphones nonetheless offer a different reading. While the head sound of men draws attention to their interiority, the sonic leakage of women appears on their bodies. As stated earlier, the feminine body is, as part of a larger institutional discourse, a sexually saturated sign that confesses its desire through a frenzy of the visible. Sound leakage, as a not entirely decipherable object, functions to represent the secret of her concealed pleasure, which the film subsequently converts into a visible confession seen on the

[77] Williams, *Hard-core*, 38-42.

character's body. Consider, for example, the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*. A highly successful romantic comedy, *Pretty Woman* is a contemporary fusion of the Pygmalion myth and the "prince-meets-princess" fairy tale, where a prostitute, Vivian (Julia Roberts) and a business tycoon, Edward (Richard Gere) fall in love. Early in the film Vivian listens to Prince's "Kiss" with a Walkman as she bathes in a hotel room, Figure 2.12. Edward, at first on the phone trying to secure a date for a formal event in the other room, is drawn to the bathroom after hearing Vivian's voice. Unbeknownst to Vivian, he locks her in his gaze as she lip-syncs and dances along to the music. Although we do not hear Vivian's headphones actually sounding, her singing might be thought of as a sort of vocal sonic leakage, or possibly even possession, with her body mediating the experience. She accompanies this singing with dancing, swaying her shoulders back and forth. Just as the bubbles in her bath both help to draw attention to and conceal her nakedness, the singing and dancing mediate her internal experience and, simultaneously, act to mask it. The difference between her experience of the music and ours is situated in the audiovisual — the discrepancy lies in the difference between what is heard and what is seen. We see that Vivian is listening to something, but what she hears is never fully audible: it remains a secret.

Figure 2.12: Vivian listens to Prince's "Kiss" while taking a bath

This notion of the secret informs Shuhei Hosokawa's investigation of social interactions with Walkman users. According to him, the content of a user's Walkman is secondary in importance to its form as a secret.[78] "[The listener] lets people know that he has a secret. He neither refuses communication nor is isolated from reality…[Instead] he lets people know voluntarily that he has the *truth*."[79] Vivian keeps her sound world concealed, its only signs filter through confessions of pleasure on her exterior. At least two corollaries exist between the pleasure shown on Vivian's body and that of women in hard-core pornography. First, her posture is suggestive, as she lies on her back with her head tilted. Secondly, most of the shots showing Vivian focus on her overdramatized facial expressions. In these shots she often has her eyes closed, signifying her pleasure, but also marking her unawareness of her surroundings. In this sense, Vivian's experience is confessional. However, it is different from the presentation of the hard-core confessional in that the latter tries to present itself as involuntary. Vivian's expressions on the contrary seem voluntary. She does not perform for anyone, and this lack of audience

[78] Shuhei Hosokawa, "The Walkman Effect," *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 177-179.
[79] Ibid.," 177. Original emphasis.

authenticates her outward expression of pleasure. Her expression is not involuntary, but rather personal and private, controlled in its honesty. Edward occupies a voyeuristic position, then, as he gazes upon Vivian's intimate moment. It is this surreptitious performance of pleasure that lies at the heart of Edward's own desire, a desire for the absolute knowledge of an other's pleasure.

Whereas *Pretty Woman* presents an example of a confidential yet voluntary confession, the pleasure of the secret can also be involuntary, as is the case in the horror film *Trick or Treat* (1986). The film centers on a metal-head teenager who obtains an obscure final recording of a dead metal superstar. Unfortunately, the record also holds the star's tortured soul, which the teen accidently unleashes by playing the record backwards. Later in the film, Angie, a high school cheerleader, finds a taped copy of the haunted record. As she listens the headphones begin to glow while a mysterious vapor seeps out. The vapor materializes and begins to undress Angie. Unlike *Pretty Woman*, the sound leakage is not mediated in her voice or dance, but instead through headphone sound and the confession of the body. Initially it may seem that the sequence is an example of internal head sound, given the placement of the music in the sound track. However, I would argue that there is a disparity between the music and the sexual reaction it causes that suggests what we hear is different from what we see Angie hearing. That is, the pleasure played out on her body is not equally apparent in the music. Although the music expresses sexuality through the sounds of pounding drums and wailing guitar, the music embodied in the green vapor remains hidden. Instead, Angie conveys her pleasure through bodily reaction: heavy, labored breathing, her head leaning back with her eyes closed. Several features of her body language relate to Vivian's in *Pretty Woman*, perhaps suggesting further that such postures are "authentic" in both private and involuntary confessional depictions.

Furthermore, by representing this music in the visual form of green vapor, the film focuses attention less on the subjective experience of Angie and more on what the music can physically do to her body—principally that it can give her pleasure she did not even know she wanted. Such representations suggest the feminine body as susceptible to ravishment or sexual coercion. In contrast to depictions of rape, and perhaps more ideologically dangerous, ravishment portrays women who are at first resistant or oblivious to receiving sexual pleasure, but ultimately "lie back and enjoy it." For Williams, ravishment is a pornographic utopia, a patriarchal construction that "offers a world in which female power is virtually nonexistent, [such that] rape, considered as a violent sexual crime that coerces its victims, is an impossibility."[80] Depictions of ravishment thus reinforce two notions at the heart of this misogynistically constructed feminine sexuality. First, that women's desire is something objectively measurable, and second, the fallacious attempt to justify the belief that what am takes pleasure in must also give a woman pleasure.[81] In this case, the depiction of ravishment serves to reinforce Angie's confession as all the more involuntary. Indeed, this example is not unlike that of Diderot's tale. It is with the power of Mangogul's ring that the music compels Angie's body to speak. *Pretty Woman* presents a similar case. Vivian may volunteer her confession, but it is listening to the music that brings the confession about. What the representations of Vivian and Angie have in common is their way of expressing an internal experience as an external confession of pleasure. These confessions are necessarily *audio*visual constructions. By depicting women with a general lack of, or enigmatic, internal sound, filmmakers attempt to draw attention to a given character's pleasurable experience through the visible confessions of

[80] Williams, *Hard-core*, 165.
[81] Ibid.,164-165.

the body. Angie's confession appears markedly involuntary in its juxtaposition of the partially heard and the excessively seen. In the case of Vivian her confession is voluntary, but also private—Edward intrudes on her private expression of pleasure.

Yet another example of involuntary confession occurs in James Cameron's technophobic nightmare *The Terminator* (1984). The film follows Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) a run-of-the-mill twenty-something who, in an incredible turn of events, finds herself the target of a murderous droid, known simply as the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger), sent from the future to assassinate her. The headphone sequences revolve not around Sarah, but her roommate, Ginger (Bess Motta). Ginger listens to her Walkman throughout the course of the evening in three distinct sequences. In the first, she dances along to her music while putting on her make-up. In the second she listens to headphones as she has sex with Matt (Rick Rossovich) and, in the final sequence she sings and dances along to her music as she makes a late night snack, unaware of the Terminator's presence. All three scenarios situate the headphones as the source of confession. While Ginger consciously performs various tasks, her body seems subconsciously toreact to the music in the form of dancing and lip-syncing. This is particularly apparent in the second sequence. The answering machine threatens to interrupt the couple and Matt avoids the interruption by turning up the volume to Ginger's headphones. In so doing, Matt inadvertently "turns up" Ginger's bodily reaction: her eyes close in concentration and her head bobs become more exaggerated. Ginger might choose to listen, but the music summons the reaction, suggesting that perhaps Ginger has less control over her body than one might originally suspect.[82]

[82] One could argue here that the film here takes advantage of the relationship between musical style and headphone sound to compel Vivian's body into involuntary confession. It is no coincidence that Vivian listens to Prince, a pop

Like *Pretty Woman* and *Trick or Treat*, *The Terminator* uses sonic leakage to obscure what Ginger listens to while simultaneously overemphasizing her physical responses in a frenzy of the visible. This is particularly clear in the film's sex scene where, notably, Ginger is clearly more excited by the pleasure of the music than by Matt. Nevertheless, the film's representations of headphones explicitly offers something more than just a sexualized feminine body. Although Ginger's reaction is a "frenzy of the visible," in the context of the film the headphones also represent a woman so invested in her sound technologies that they distract her from the peril of her surroundings. Indeed, the entire film acts as an allegory for technological determinism, going out of its way to demonstrate the prominence of technology in everyday life: hairdryers and curlers, televisions, radios, and so on—a not-so-veiled example of society's over-reliance on technology.[83] The film displays an apocalyptic future where humans scrounge to live while battling robots of their own creation. The threat of these technological beings is foremost embodied in the Terminator, a cyborg form enclosed by a shell of organic tissue made to look identical to "humans." The Terminator is an uncanny enemy. In this way the Terminator as human on the outside, machine on the inside, offers a reverse image of Ginger and her Walkman, who is human on the inside and machine on the outside. Throughout the film, it is often various commonplace technologies that put Sarah Connor and others in danger during this (wo)manhunt. For instance, the telephone, which allows its user to speak with another without the need for

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star whose ambivalent sex and gender along with his status as black musician, fits into a dominant ideology of black music as hypersexualized. In other words, it is not a surprise that black music compels Vivian's body. In a way the whole lip sync process represents a removed minstrelsy in that the film revolves around a white woman performing a role (prostitution) that in American society is generally carried out by minorities. And yet the class ascent that the movie suggests for Vivian is frankly an unattainable possibility for women of color. For more, see D. Soyie Madison's essay, "*Pretty Woman* through the Triple Lens of Black Feminist Spectatorship," *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Bell et. al. (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995), 224-235.

[83] Karen Mann, "Narrative Entanglements: 'The Terminator,'" *Film Quarterly* 43, No. 2 (1989-1990): 17-27.

physical proximity, leads Connor unknowingly to give up her whereabouts to the Terminator, who on the other end of the line flawlessly impersonates Connor's mother's voice. Similarly, it is a message that Connor leaves on her home answering machine that initially gives away her location to the Terminator.

The three significant scenes in which Ginger dons headphones also highlight her disregard for her surroundings — a decision that becomes progressively more dangerous, starting with a social faux pas and ending with her death. In the first scene (Figure 2.13) Ginger and Sarah are getting ready for a night on the town. They stand in front of a mirror, drying their hair and putting on make up while Ginger puts on her Walkman. A few moments later Matt calls and, mistaking Sarah for Ginger, initiates a sexually lewd conversation. Sarah, finding the whole situation hilarious, calls for Ginger to pick up the phone. Of course, Ginger cannot hear when Sarah calls her so the situation drags on for much longer than necessary, until Sarah reveals herself. Embarrassed, Matt asks for Ginger, to whom he recites his dirty script again from the beginning. The "danger" here is quite minimal and perhaps even nonexistent. Ginger's absorption into her own music allows for Matt's lewd suggestions to become a short monologue. However, it sets up Ginger's disconnection in plausible terms, as she goes about her life in her own little world, primping in the mirror and listening to her music. Matt, too, displays a lack of aptitude for technology, in that he never verifies who is on the other line of the phone. Regardless, the scenario alludes to the eventual death of both Ginger and Matt at the hands of the Terminator.

In the second scene featuring Ginger's Walkman, Matt and Ginger are enjoying having the apartment to themselves (they are supposed to meet Sarah later at the bar). The preceding sequence sets the scene and involves local police officers trying to get in touch with Sarah to

warn her that she might be in danger. When a detective calls the apartment, he only gets the answering machine, and the film cuts to the inside of the apartment, where Matt and Ginger are having sex. The ringing phone pushes Matt to turn up the volume, ignoring an important call from the police warning of an imminent danger. In the final scene, Ginger wears her headphones as she makes a midnight snack. Singing and dancing around, she is unaware that in the next room the Terminator has broken in and is fighting Matt. It is only when the boyfriend's body is hurled through the door that Ginger becomes aware of her peril. The Terminator, assuming Ginger is Sarah, shoots her as she attempts to escape. Just as others can only guess at her sonic secret, in the sounds of her Walkman, Ginger silences herself from the sounds of the diegetic world, from the sounds outside of her body. Her disregard for the latter ultimately leads to her death at the hands of the Terminator.

Figure 2.13: Ginger in her headphones

The Terminator makes explicit a message implied in all the examples given thus far: wearing headphones leads to a dangerous tapping of feminine desire. In *Trick or Treat* Angie pays the ultimate price for indulging in the pleasure of listening. Headphones may give pleasure, but they distract from the surrounding world, which, in the world of film, has consequences.

While in *Pretty Woman* the repercussions of Vivian's unawareness ends with a sort of feigned embarrassment, it nevertheless belongs in a collection of films where the disengaged subject is punished. A more recent example exists in the 2009 horror film *The House of the Devil*, about Samantha (Jocelin Donahue), a college undergraduate who unknowingly takes a job as a house sitter only to find out she has been duped by cult members who intend to use her in a satanic ritual. In a short montage sequence Samantha dances all around the empty house while listening to The Fixx's "One Thing Leads to Another" in the foreground of her headphones. As she dances her way upstairs she bumps into a vase, which shatters into a thousand pieces on the wood floor below. The music plays primarily in the foreground as we follow Samantha, but there are two exceptions. First, at the end of the sequence the sound of the vase breaking interrupts the montage, contrasting Samantha's bright and lively musical experience with the eerie silence of the still, empty house. Samantha's dancing body leads to the destruction of property, to the fracturing of an object in the real world due to her obliviousness to that reality. More significantly, however, is a moment mid-dance montage. The image track goes dark and the music cuts out until a door opens at the top of the frame revealing Samantha at the top of the frame paired with the music leaking from her headphones. The camera quickly zooms in on Samantha, who, after finding the light switch, peers curiously around before shutting the door, cueing the sound track to return to head sound. This shot reveals the possibility of another subject position lurking in the dark basement, which, as one might expect, is later revealed as the ritual site. Both shifts from inside to outside reveal a common point: they suggest that Samantha's disconnection is dangerous.

Samantha, along with Vivian, Angela, and Ginger share this danger. However this danger threatens men wearing headphones, too. Both Rob and Tom's use of headphones obscures

reality and factors into their social immaturity. In this sense, their headphone usage endangers them both. So what exactly distinguishes the dangers faced by male and female headphone wearers? Perhaps it is that women pay more dearly than men for their isolation. Ginger and Angie pay with their lives and Samantha is brutally raped, but Rob and Tom are only in danger of staying in their unsatisfying jobs and losing their girlfriends. For women, the danger is physical, for men existential. Vivian's danger is the least pronounced—she inadvertently reveals a secret part of herself, something personal that she would not usually share with a client, not unlike an actual physical kiss. Even so, Vivian has something to lose in baring her vulnerability—her humanity. Of course, Vivian's danger seems even less pronounced than this, and besides, there are several examples of men who pay dearly for their inattention. For example, in *Grosse Point Blank* (1997) a teen listens to heavy metal and plays an arcade game unaware of the shoot out unfolding behind him. His life is spared when Martin (John Cusack) daringly pulls him out of the building seconds before it explodes. In a more iconic example, Freddie Kreuger (Robert Englund) liquidates headphone-wearing teen Glen Lantz (Johnny Depp) in *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) in his sleep. The difference, I would argue, is not in disconnection itself, but instead the object of desire that causes that disconnection. Headphones offer access to the perilous desire of the feminine self, tainted with uncontrollable emotion and insatiable sexual pleasure. For men, the danger does not lie in the frenzied inner desire, but in a whole self, an idealized unification that results in the detachment from the social world—the world of the breadwinner. By giving excess attention to the self, the headphone wearing man ends up in social isolation. He is unable to participate in the deeds and situations that signify his masculine status and thus remains caught in a state of perpetual adolescence.

Headphone sound is an image that is made to look *and* sound differently depending on the gender of its user. On the one hand, headphone sound represents one of a myriad ways of sexualizing the feminine body. It does so by transcribing her private audible pleasure in to a visually legible discourse of the confessional. On the other hand, headphone sound in the form of head space represents male social inadequacy through its resonance with a recent history of defining masculine domestic space through high fidelity sound. On the one hand it connects him to the perpetually adolescent image of the playboy bachelor cured through the reinforcement of the heteronormative couple, while on the other it connects him to the audiophile, a man so tied up in his masculine space of hi-fi sound that he remains strangely aloof from his surroundings. For both, headphone sound is a mark of excessive indulgence. Indulging in pleasure is, it seems, always an illicit act for women and as such is a punishable offence. While films also punish men for their indulgence, it is usually to a lesser extent. Instead, headphones offer a sign of detachment, or social impediment, that mark th wearer as non-normative. These men do not need punishment, they need healing, which often comes in the from close acqaintances.

CONCLUSION

Acousticons of the damaged interior, whether they be anchored in musical or privatized listening modes, both call attention to themselves through the skewing of the dominant listening practices, and they help to reinforce those practices as normative by leaving them open. In Western art music, this turn inward was marked by an aversion to overused dominant harmony in favor of mediant relationships. Film music drew on this musical lexicon to convey meaning in its medium, but now with an added benefit of sharpening signs of the private and the intimate with the coming of the sound film era. Moreover, in early horror sound film, filmmakers made use of

the dual function of the uncanny and internally marked the power of the lowered submediant chord for monsters performing music in the Romantic idiom. The ideal of intimate listening was realized in headphone and high fidelity sound, practices that became identity markers for those who over indulged, in the form of two enduring images: the hyper-sexualized woman and he man caught in arrested development. These two acousticons, both musical and sonic, are thus connected and reverberate through the long 19th century into the present day.

Chapter 3: Sounds Like the Good Old Days: Acousticons and Nostalgia

> Out of the Past was the name of the store and its products consisted of memories. What was prosaic and even vulgar to one generation had been transmuted by the mere passing of years to a status at once magical and also camp.

These are the opening lines to an untitled novel by Gil Pender (Owen Wilson), the nostalgic protagonist of Woody Allen's 2010 film *Midnight in Paris*. Gil is a Hollywood screenwriter turned novelist vacationing in Paris with his fiancée, Inez (Rachel McAdams), and her parents. While his soon-to-be in-laws find Paris dissatisfying, it spellbinds Gil as he ambles down endless streets and alleys, wallowing in the city's bygones. He longs to live in the Paris of the 1920s, a fantasy that exacerbates his relationship with Inez, who sees him as living "in perpetual denial" of a painful present. According to Inez's pompous, pseudo-intellectual friend, Paul (Michael Sheen), Gil suffers from "golden-age thinking," trying to escape his unsatisfying, enigmatic present in a simplified, romanticized past. But Gil's preoccupation with an era long gone transforms from fantasy to reality when a mysterious car shows up at the stroke of midnight and seemingly transports him into the past where he meets legendary artists, authors, and other idolized producers of culture living in 1920s Paris, including Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, and Ernest Hemingway. After a few nights of what at first seems like a dream come true, Gil gradually realizes that escaping to a former time will not make him happier, that his chosen past will just become another present in which his longing will eventually recur. In the end he opts to move out of the past in an attempt to find happiness in his own time, abandoning his quickly deteriorating relationship with Inez and ultimately moving to present-day Paris.

Nostalgia is an important theme in *Midnight in Paris*, which presents it as a complex concept with multiple layers and modes, as well as positive and negative qualities. Living in the past does not lead Gil to contentment, yet at the same time his *longing* for the past, his nostalgic experience, does not lead him to discontentment. On the contrary, a thing "out of the past" can enchant; nostalgic objects may allure and affect one deeply, giving experiences that offer empowerment or fulfillment. For example, Gil overhears an old record while shopping with Inez and her mother, Helen (Mimi Kennedy). Helen is telling Gil and Inez about the "*wonderful*" American film she went to see the night before when they happen by an old record shop. A knickknack in a nearby shop window catches the eyes of Helen and Inez, and as they hurry off for closer inspection, Cole Porter's "You Do Something to Me," sounds out, distantly, from a nearby Victrola in the old record shop.

The distance in this scene is multilayered and, as we will see, the concept of distance will prove important to the features and functions of acousticons of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a type of distance. It is both a representation of a distant place and past, and a feeling of loss or longing for a distant place or time. In its appearance in *Midnight in Paris*, "You Do Something to Me" creates a sonic distance in two ways. The first is a spatial distance; the recording is only heard as background, panned in the left offscreen space, suggesting a diegetic distance between Gil and the record. Once the music catches Gil's attention and he starts to move toward to the record shop, the spatial distance recedes as the volume gradually increases. The song's alluring power captures Gil's attention and draws him like a tractor beam, a function echoed in the unfolding song's lyrics: "You do something to me/something that simply mystifies me/tell me why should it be/you have the power to hypnotize me." A sense of intimacy is palpable, and as Gil draws closer, he stops and gives his full attention to the music. For a short span, the volume increases

and suggests the possibility of a shift to the acousticonic interior, before Inez finally interrupts, pulling Gil, and the audience, back into the present.

The second acousticonic form of distance is temporal. Unlike the spatial distance of the first, there is a temporal distance between the object, a record from the 1920s, and its subject, a screenwriter/novelist of the 2010s. Some of this temporal distance is clearly marked by the musical style; the style of singing and piano accompaniment are reminiscent of Tin Pan Alley music. There are other properties, however, that fit more ambivalently in the purely musical realm. Like the out-of-tune vocal cracks that suggest a time before auto-tune, the low fidelity recording quality suggests an antiquated recording apparatus. These qualities are somewhat distinct from the more traditionally musical qualities of the song and yet they intermingle with one another. Put bluntly, the song is filtered here in such a way as to suggest that it was made in, in fact belongs to, an earlier moment of time. This second, tangible marker of distance has a connotative implication that relates to a more generic nostalgic distance: the recording as an object out of the past, suggesting a time and place long past, and bringing with it a whole, potential array of affections associated with it. The acousticonic elements of distance—low fidelity, tin-pan-alley style, and slightly out-of-tune singing—combine here to produce a nostalgic, acoustic object that affords Gil a moment of reflection as he pauses and gives the recording his full attention. What results is not a moment out of time, but instead an image of superimposed times: the presence of the past and the present.

We may suppose that Gil recollects upon his own personal experience with Cole Porter, whom he met the prior evening in one of his time-travel journeys. On his first night in the past, Gil finds himself crashing Jean Cocteau's birthday party in the company of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. As Gil comes around to the fact that he has been transported to his ideal place and

time, Cole Porter tinkles out "Let's Do It (Let's Fall In Love)" at the piano. The differences in sound quality and volume between this "live" performance and the old record are striking. The party has many guests, all chatting with one another, but these ambient sounds stay at a low rumble and Porter's crisp voice easily sails over the chatter. The wood paneled room appears to be quite large and yet there is a dryness in Porter's voice. Again, both the sound quality and volume are noteworthy in comparison to the recording, because together they suggest a presentness, a directness to Porter, not quite accessible in the record. But it is the lack of directness that affords the record its complication of time. Gil's Victrola experience is not entirely lodged in the past, as is the case with Cocteau's party, and this has dramatic consequences for the film's narrative. The record has social relevance in Gil's present in a way that Cocteau's party does not. As he listens, he strikes up a conversation with the record store salesperson, Gabrielle (Léa Seydoux), and they bond over the music of Porter. The flirtatious conversation with Gabrielle will later prove significant in Gil's future, following the failure of his engagement to Inez. The film ends by suggesting new beginnings, as we see Gil and Gabrielle walking together in the Paris rain.

Both of these scenes represent the past, yet the point of recalling the past in each seems at odds. One presents a musically performative mise-en-scène as real place, the other a phonograph recording, as a place only partially captured, and a past only partially accessible. Gil's experience of the party works as evidence of this difference: he does not need to be nostalgic for the moment; he is living the moment. He does not treat the Fitzgeralds like a still-life at a museum but engages with them. Nor does he listen to Porter with the contemplation apparent in his engagement with the Victrola recording. He is part of this past, wrapped up in it. His experience of the recording, by contrast, is a partial past, an object whose sounds have collected

a proverbial dust of audible antiquity. Unlike the party, it is about contemplation, about *feeling* (but also thinking about) the divorced past.

Each of these scenes from *Midnight in Paris* represent two different modes of nostalgia that Svetlana Boym terms reconstructive and reflexive nostalgia, respectively. Gil's "real" experiences of 1920s Paris work restoratively. They are not nostalgic because they appear to be the "true" past, displacing distance with a seemingly whole, direct connection. Gil's experience of the record, however, is reflexive; it is about contemplating the irreconcilable distance more so than the object itself:

> Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt.[1]

This does not imply for Boym—and nor does it imply here—that these two modes of nostalgia occur in complete separation. In fact, more often than not both modes of nostalgia occur together. A record is an attempt to capture a specific moment in time in order to play the past in the future. It thus has a reconstructive element. And there are reflexive features to Gil's forays into the past—such as the fact that he brings his present, their future, with him.

In the first part of her book, Boym focuses on the different ways in which restorative and reflexive nostalgia work in various cultural productions, but mostly she considers the power of nostalgia in visual form. She discusses reflexive nostalgia in terms of a visible patina. As I have suggested above, the nostalgic can also, and frequently does, take aural form. Indeed, it seems

[1] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xviii.

more likely that sonic nostalgia is just as prevalent— if not more so—than visual nostalgia. In addition to Boym's visual patina, what would an acoustical patina *sound* like? I consider that very question below. I will also examine how other films make use of the acoustical qualities of low fidelity, echo, and reverb to invoke both restorative and reflexive nostalgia. *Midnight in Paris* uses recording fidelity as a way of awakening the magic of the bygone era of 1920s Paris. *American Graffiti* (1973) appeals to restorative nostalgia and its main source for producing nostalgia is the musical recordings it deploys. Unlike the work of other scholars who consider the latter film's music, I will focus on how acousticons, both in the diegetic space of the film and in the musical recordings themselves, produce nostalgia. In contrast to *American Graffiti*, *Dirty Dancing* exemplifies reflexive nostalgia. Although it also uses recordings from the 1950s and 1960s to produce nostalgia, it superimposes these acousticons of reverb with those contemporary to the release of the film, the 1980s. In both cases, it is the connotative potential of echo, reverb, and other ambient-quality acousticons that emerged and flourished in the mid and late 1950s that demand an acousticonic reading and that account for the transferring of nostalgic power to these rock'n'roll sound tracks.

AUTHENTICATING THE PAST: NOSTALGIC MODES AND MOODS

Before moving to my case studies, I should first admit to a contradiction in the analysis I have given of the Victrola recording scene in *Midnight in Paris*. I have attributed an authenticity to the nostalgic object of the Cole Porter record as if it were one of the memory products in the fictional store Out of the Past. Yet despite the recording's alleged historical attributes, it is neither a recording of Cole Porter, nor is it an old recording. A contemporary musician, Conal Fawkes, performs all the Cole Porter songs on the *Midnight in Paris* sound track. The musical

and recording styles therefore collude to produce and represent a sense of pastness. With the techniques of digital audio production, recreating sounds of the past is often as easy as the click of a button or two. These effects, like their various visual equivalents available on Instagram, are often presets labeled as "Old Movie" or "Old Record" in digital audio workstations like Garageband.

An object need not be out of the past in order to evoke nostalgia; it must only appear so to its beholder. Consider an example that parallels Gil's nostalgic moment with the Victrola recording. In a scene from *The Shining* (1980), Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) eerily transfers from his own present to the 1920s as signaled with the start of a recording of Ray Noble's "Midnight, the Stars and You." The low fidelity of the recording, in this case, evokes eeriness, perhaps coming from the fact that we know that Jack and his family are the only occupants of the hotel; or perhaps it derives from the fact that the recording is old, a ghostly audible projection of sometime else. As Jack enters the main ballroom, it appears full of guests dressed in 1920s fashion.

Jack's transport to the 1920s is unlike Gil's, which seemingly arises out of his desire for the golden age of Paris, whereas the music in *The Shining* and its sense of pastness does not seem to arise from Jack's desires. The recording continues into the restroom, where Jack meets Delbert Grady (Philip Stone), the Overlook caretaker whom Jack recognizes from a newspaper clipping from his own time, a man who viciously murdered his wife and twin daughters in 1921. In the restroom Noble's recording is bathed in a heavy reverb. The recording appears one more time in *The Shining*, at the end of the film, as the camera gradually zooms to a picture in the Overlook ballroom that reveals Jack in a photo taken in 1921.

Midnight in Paris and *The Shining* both achieve pastness through their respective recording sounds, though they exploit this pastness to different ends. "Midnight, the Stars and You," is unlike "You Do Something to Me," in that the recording used in the film is not a cover, but the original Ray Nobles recording. While the recording may have been sonically manipulated for the film, it was not made specifically for the film. Perhaps its origin in the past gives it a greater semblance of authenticity. We are, in fact, led to believe that Jack is in 1921 when the recording begins, that what he listens to is not "old" but part of the past in which he presently exists. However, the Victrola that Gil listens to is in his present; it is the recording that evokes the past through its imitation of "pastness." Still, like the Conal Fawkes recording, "Midnight" is not from the year it suggests, but instead is from a 1934 recording. Even if the Cole Porter song were not from the 1920s, it would not matter since Gil listens to it in his present. But while "Midnight, the Stars and You" is anachronistic, its recorded sound is "old enough" to stand for the 1920s. While both recordings suggest a different type of pastness, both use a similar sonic property to create this pastness. Each uses acousticonic low-fidelity that, regardless of the time they actually index, effectively function to produce nostalgia. Both examples operate in what Frederic Jameson has termed the "nostalgic mode."

Nostalgia, for Jameson, is a late-capitalist mode of cultural production that functions through stylistic connotations and stereotypes of pastness so as to efface history. In effect, a postmodern political economy can deploy nostalgia as a means of manipulating and dominating the present through rewriting myths of the past. Such, he argued, was the case in policies associated with Reaganism, where proposed solutions often exacerbated rather than solved problems. In any case, he discusses the nostalgic mode as a symptom of what he terms pastiche

culture, arising from the erasure of personal artistic style in the wake of artistic modernism.[2] According to Jameson, pastiche is parody emptied of its political content:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus a blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs…[3]

Pastiche signals the erasure of individualistic style, forcing cultural producers to mine creativity of the past, recreating and remixing and gradually reifying it as commodity, as consumable image. Memories become products for sale in a post-modern form of cultural production. In this process, the past comes to exist as consumable object and not referential in some "real" but in a "multitudinous photographic simulacrum."[4] "Real" history gets lost in a culture of pastiche, in the countless photographic (and *phono*graphic) images, consumed as the past rather than as representations *of* the past. In this culture of pastiche, nostalgia is not an attempt to understand or portray a history, it is "not a list of facts or historical realities (although its items are not invented and are in some sense 'authentic'), but rather a list of stereotypes, of ideas of facts and historical realities,"[5] an approach to pastness through "stylistic connotation...by glossy qualities of the image."[6] These surface details carry over to the sounds of the record surface. In both *Midnight in Paris* and *The Shining*, it is the stereotypical quality of the recording that suggests the idea of the 1920s. Both recordings, however, are historically inaccurate.

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[2] The actual relation between postmodern and modern is tenuous at best and tangential to the argument set forth here. For a full account of Jameson's framing of postmodernism, see *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).
[3] Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 65.
[4] Jameson, "Postmodernism," 66.
[5] Frederic Jameson, "Nostalgia for the Present," in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 279.
[6] Jameson, "Postmodernism," 67.

Such inaccuracy is insidious for Jameson because these mass-consumed stereotypes of the past conceal real history in favor of historicism that results in historical amnesia. In *Midnight in Paris*, just before Gil hears the Porter record, Helen attempts to recount the *wonderful* American film she saw the night before, but strangely she cannot remember the name of it, who was in it, or what it was about. And the epitome of the amnesia-laden, pastiche product is the nostalgia film where the past is not recounted in fact, but "refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation." *American Graffiti* is the first film that captures what he means by the 'nostalgic mode,' because it longs for the "mesmerizing lost reality of the Eisenhower era," both as a time of national peace and prosperity and of the innocence of a neophyte counterculture embodied in youth, that of social revolt.[7] Lucas combines car style, fashion, and, most importantly, popular music to evoke the feel of fifties-ness in the film, which the actual history of the 1950s disappears beneath. From *American Graffiti* onward, an onslaught of films were produced in *la mode rétro*.

What is unclear about Jameson's nostalgic mode is how it differs from any other form of filmic recollection of the past. That is, he implies a past accessible through some non-nostalgic form of history that evades the nostalgic mode prior to *American Graffiti*. Instead, Jameson's negative rhetoric surrounding pastiche and nostalgia is itself nostalgic, romanticizing modernism and a time of purported, "real" history.[8] As Linda Hutcheon puts it, "Is Jameson's implicit mythologizing and idealizing of a more stable, pre-*late*-capitalist (that is, modernist) world not in

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Richard Dyer put it well, "Jameson's putting of 'real' in quotes suggests however the problem of historical knowledge, to wit, that the past was real, for sure, but it's not there now, and we can only know of it through what it has left behind, a great deal of which (images, accounts) were already representations of their time (their present, our past)." In, "The Notion of Pastiche," in *The Aesthetics of Popular Art*, ed. Jostein Gripsrud (Kirstiansand/Bergen: Høyskoleforlaget, 2001): 79.

itself perhaps part of an aesthetics (or even politics) of nostalgia?"[9] Moreover, his framing of nostalgia as pastiche imposes arbitrary limits on the categorization and definition of each. As Richard Dyer has noted, other than for Jameson's assertion, there is no reason pastiche must be thought of as blank parody, nor is there any reason to limit pastiche to non-ironic, non-parodic imitation.[10] Such limitations are constructs that uphold the binary between high and low art forms.[11] By appropriating nostalgia, Jameson effectively effaces the meaning of the word, its associations with affective feelings of longing and loss. In both cases, Jameson's reading of the function of nostalgia as a tool of domination itself threatens to efface the rather diverse experiences of nostalgia.

At the same time, Jameson's nostalgic mode recognizes that retro styles need not necessarily appeal to these emotions, but may instead foreground their quality of "pastness." More importantly, just because not all instances of nostalgia are examples of pastiche, we cannot ignore the fact that nostalgia can, and often is, nevertheless used to this end. As Paul Grainge argues, a corrective that considers only nostalgia's affective qualities will fail to capture its contemporary condition. Instead a critical theory of nostalgia must be able to mediate between the poles of the nostalgic "mode," the stylized stereotypes of Jameson, and the nostalgic "mood," nostalgia as affection and personal experience.[12]

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[9] Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern," University of Toronto English Library, 1998, accessed February 8, 2015 http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html

[10] "Because pastiche does not (or need not) have ironic or satirical intent, it is for Jameson just pointless copying; it is Jameson that blanks what pastiche does rather than the practice itself." See Dyer, "Pastiche," 78.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in Retro America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Press, 2002).

Understanding nostalgia as mood is, in fact, closer to the word's original meaning; first used to describe homesickness felt among Swiss mercenaries in the18th century.[13] Its scholarly origins first comes in Fred Davis' study *Yearning for Yesterday*, to describe golden-age thinking as a way of escaping ambiguities and problems of the present.[14] For Grainge, "Nostalgia as mood...is a feeling characterized by the perception of loss and the prescription of longing."[15] But a focus on nostalgia as mood centers on the past object of desire, rather than critical questions of why, and by whom, that object is desired—and who might gain advantage from controlling the object of desire—all of which pertain to concerns of the nostalgic mode. Nevertheless, the nostalgic mode cannot be completely divorced of mood, for it is often (although not always) deployed for its affective potential. In short, Grainge considers nostalgia to be a cultural style, broadly divorced from any *necessary* concept of loss," but at the same time he aims not to ignore how "aestheticized nostalgia" forms in specific social contexts.

Specifically, Grainge focuses on the use of monochrome film in relation to nostalgic modes and moods invoked by various medias of the 1990s. He includes monochrome as it appears in photography, news stories, and television, as well, but many of his examples come from Hollywood film of the 1990s. The mode/mood axes allow him, for instance to consider the ways in which authenticity-laden black-and-white imagery in films like *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* fit within a cultural style of documentary genre emphasizing verisimilitude in order to, on the one hand, appeal to a collective nostalgia for the past among middle class Americans, and on the other, to conceal a master narrative that rewrites the white male as hero

[13] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 3-20.
[14] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: Free Press, 1979).
[15] Grainge, *Monochrome Memory*, 24-25.

within a shroud of truthfulness.[16] His quintessential example, which serves as his introduction, is Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, which (similar to the opening of *Midnight in Paris*) begins with a series of establishing shots of iconic places and spaces around the city. *Manhattan*, as Grainge notes, begins with the "soaring clarinet glissando" from George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," which calls the New York City skyline into existence.[17] Both Grainge and Allen observe that Gershwin is himself from Brooklyn and the music here works to create an atmosphere of "New Yorkness" but also it gives some sense of a past New York. However, "it is Woody Allen's use of monochrome," that "provides *Manhattan* with a sustained feeling of nostalgia."[18] He then considers Allen's own take on the use of monochrome, that black and white has acquired connotations of both authenticity and of "aesthetic and expressive properties," particularly of nostalgia.[19]

The film is in monochrome, and the sound track also makes extensive use of Gershwin pieces. They are all newer arrangements recorded by Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Would use, say, of the original 1924 recording of "Rhapsody in Blue" effect the nostalgic potential of the sound track? Perhaps. Just like the iconicity of the black-and-white image, the acousticonicity of sound image has aesthetic and expressive properties that might evoke the nostalgic. However, a crackle lacks definition not color spectrum. Perhaps a better analogy would exist between monophonic and stereophonic sound recording and monochrome and Technicolor. In that case we might liken the warps and crackles of a low fidelity recording as acousticonic versions of scratches and grain in a film's image track. In

[16] Ibid., 125-154.
[17] Ibid., 2.
[18] Ibid., 1.
[19] Ibid., 2.

either case, what was at the time a prosaic sound quality that produced vulgar crackles have, by the passing of years, become assigned a magical status.

Allen shoots the opening to *Midnight in Paris* in a similar way to *Manhattan*, although with some noticeable differences. *Midnight in Paris* replaces black and white with color, the city of New York with Paris, and a contemporary recording with a historical one. Playing over a series of establishing shots of various iconic spots in Paris is Sidney Bechet's recording of "Si Tu Vois Ma Mére." Like "You Do Something to Me," and "Midnight, the Stars and You," the recording does not actually come from the time period it evokes, hailing from 1952 rather than the 1920s. It represents the nostalgic mode, or a case of "restorative" nostalgia by giving merely a sense of the past. And yet, the recording seems to complicate rather than simplify time. It is not necessarily the instrumentation, the vamp, or the vibrato-heavy soprano sax style of Bechet alone,[20] but instead in the acoustical make up of the recording itself. Like the monochrome images in the opening of *Manhattan*, the low fidelity sound forces time to pop out from the stream of images it accompanies. In most of the shots, the city is very much alive in the present. Cars whiz by; people march up and down alleys and sidewalks and various shops appear on street corners. And yet, many of these shots contain some monument, some icon of history—the Louvre, a 10th-century church, the Eiffel tower. Shots do not only contain earlier architecture; modern buildings appear right next to century-old ones. Just as "Si Tu Voit Ma Mére" unites these shots through montage, the ambience of the recording glues together the various musical parts of the recording. Amalgamating with one another, these visual and sonic icons form shards of time poking through a veneer of the present. The montage thus offers a reading of sonic

[20] A case could be made for the saxophone vibrato style, which seems to come out of early recording practices. See Mark Katz, "Aesthetics out of Exigency: Violin Vibrato and the Phonograph" in *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 94-108.

patina, where the recording ambience calls forth this reflexive image of time as suggestive of the magic of Paris that charmed so many critics upon the film's release.

This technique, using an acousticonic crackle to evoke the magic of the past, is not new to contemporary film. A notable example occurs in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) when Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) first records "Would You," and a montage ensues, revealing the lip-sync process for the making of *The Dancing Cavalier*. We start in the studio with Kathy singing with the orchestra, then cut to Lina (Jean Hagen) practicing with a recording before moving to the movie studio, where Lina lip-syncs on camera. From here, the color drains out of the image and cracks and fizzles boil to the surface of both the image track and the sound track. The reduction in fidelity adds another level of sentimentality not present in the studio shots. Here, icons and acousticons of "pastness" combine and create nostalgia for early sound film.

As suggested in *Midnight in Paris*, *The Shining*, and *Singin' in the Rain*, low fidelity recording is one of the more common acousticons employed to evoke nostalgia. There are, however, other acousticons that have nostalgic potential. One is found through the fabrication and manipulation of spatiality within recordings. Specifically, acousticons of reverb and echo have nostalgic potential. Echoes, a sort of sonic fingerprint, are fitting as representations of fragments of the past. Reverberation as the physical, sonic property of a space within which a sound resonates, may also play an important role in representing nostalgia. For it too often suggests a sonically present place with a notable visual absence. Albin J. Zak III and Peter Doyle each offer salient readings of reverb development in recorded music.[21] They use their own terms—"ambience" in the case of Zak and "spatiality" in the case of Doyle—but they both

[21] Albin J. Zak III, *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); *I Don't Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Peter Doyle, *Echo and Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music, 1900-1960* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2005).

recognize the connotative potential of reverberation as a compositional tool for musicians and producers. Not all popular music recordings use echo and reverb, and some exploit the lack of fabricated space to different connotative ends (a point I will return to later). Nevertheless, these developments in representing space not only had a profound impact on recording practices of popular music, but, as I will show, they would come to affect the films that more and more frequently showcased popular *recordings* in their sound tracks as a site of collective remembrance.

RESTORATION, REFLEXIVITY, AND REVERB IN *AMERICAN GRAFFITI* AND *DIRTY DANCING*

While spatiality in recordings initially emphasized the indexical, that is, it pointed to the particular time and place of a recording, by the mid-1950s the recording's iconic and symbolic significations took on more power. For example, The Oriole's recording of "Crying in the Chapel," actually recorded in the basement at the band's high school, uses reverb likened to that of a church.[22] Zak considers reverberation, or ambience, as "the acoustic context of sound," but he explains that this context is not necessarily constrained by the physical properties of the recording studio.[23]

> Ambience is a mediating force that gives form and character to the sound world of the recording. Like the mirror in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*—which serves as a doorway between two dimensions—it draws the listener into an aural world whose shape, dimensions, lighting, and perspective it helps define.[24]

Various technologies facilitated the movement of what originally were considered fairly fixed contexts to a myriad of possibilities such that recordings could sound like they were made in a

[22] Zak, *Don't Sound Like Nobody*, 156.
[23] Zak, *Poetics of Rock*, 76.
[24] Zak, *Poetics of Rock*, 77.

cathedral, live, or in a small, intimate room. And by the 1950s, producers and artists were using fabricated reverb as a way of creating "no places," imaginary spaces that never existed in the first place.[25]

For Zak, ambience is one of the many sonic effects that the recorded sound platform affords, along with performative signatures, timbre, texture, and echo.[26] Importantly, sonic effects are dimensions to music that artists consciously consider and manipulate when creating music. Doyle's book, *Echo & Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music Recording 1900-1960*, focuses exclusively on the shift from the indexical understanding of sound recording space to the symbolic. For him, echo and reverb are connotative, in that they may give impressions of places: American western landscapes, Hawaiian shores, or Californian surf shops. They might also evoke a sense of the mythic, the pictorial, or perhaps the frenetic.[27] Reverb on a record can appeal to one, none, or all of these features of spatiality, depending on the context of its production and consumption. However, all of these potentials are currently weighed in the making and cutting of musical recordings.

Doyle shows that the connotative power of spatiality was not an overnight shift, but one that gradually occurred over the course of the first half of the 20th century. He considers space in early recordings, in film and in radio, including how technological, practical, and social factors were pioneered in American popular music by figures like Robert Johnson and Les Paul. All of these trends culminate in the mid-1950s with the emergence of rock 'n' roll records and their

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[25] Doyle, *Echo & Reverb*.
[26] While the distinction between echo and reverb is less crucial for the purposes of this chapter, Zak explains that the two differ in terms of production and affect. He uses the example of the difference in Elvis's sound when making the switch from Sun Records, which used tape delay known as "slapback" to create an echo, where he recorded "Blue Moon of Kentucky," and the reverberation used when recording "Heartbreak Hotel" at RCA, where they put him at one side of a long hallway and the microphones at the other. Zak, *Poetics of Rock*, 70-76, esp. 70-71.
[27] Doyle, *Echo & Reverb*, 5-6.

new, teenage audiences. The connotative power of reverb was, according to Doyle, first used to its full potential in the recordings released at Chess in Chicago, and at Sun Records in Memphis, studios that were aurally identifiable by the particular echo and reverb sounds they developed. Notably, these recordings were the first to move records out of "everyday" places and into "no-place," utopian spaces that never existed in the first place.[28] Crucially for Doyle, the connotative use of sound marks a beginning of experimentation by producers of popular music culture:

> Sonic spatiality, now well excised from strictly realist or unitary significations was available to be used in concert with other musical and lyric effects as a catalyst or potentiator, and as a disrupter of despotic spatialities... The message, in the end, was not that one needed to revisit and inhabit the spaces and spatialities wrought at Chess and Sun Studios ... but rather the empowering knowledge that spatiality was on call, to be used as was seen fit.[29]

In the end, the liberation of spatiality from the indexical in music recording, a freedom gained partly due to innovations from Hollywood,[30] would have particular consequences for film. As recordings became the commonplace "originals" of music, and as songs found their way to larger and larger audiences, it became more and more common to use prerecorded popular music in sound tracks in order to appeal to larger audiences.[31] Since this music comes from the actual or imagined experiences of the past of many enculturated audience members, there is a built-in nostalgic potential in using prerecorded popular music.

American Graffiti certainly utilizes the nostalgic potential of popular music. For David Shumway, the film exemplifies what he calls "commodified nostalgia"—which can operate in either the nostalgic mode or mood—that rock 'n' roll sound tracks made possible within film. In

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[28] Ibid., 233.
[29] Ibid., 227.
[30] Ibid., 94-119.
[31] Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

order for commodified nostalgia to function, there must already be a private, affective-based nostalgia that exists among consumers. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the power of representing news and history was picked up by a mass media that allowed more people from different places and with different backgrounds to share similar memories. Nostalgic films like *American Graffiti* play on this representational power by using popular music to project a sense of 1950s-ness, but that power relies on the fact that the audience of 1973 already understood 1950s rock as "golden oldies," a precedent set by radio stations widely disseminating the music used in films across America.[32]

The experience of listening to a golden oldie on the radio differs from experiencing it as part of a film in that the former evokes personal memories, perhaps of the time or perhaps of a different experience of listening to the song, while the latter uses popular music "to evoke the fiction of a common past. Popular music works because it was and is widely shared, but not necessarily because the audience literally remembers the songs."[33] This latter point is important, since Shumway's concept of commodified nostalgia hinges on the idea that one need not actually have experiences of the past in order to recognize and experience it nostalgically in nostalgic films.

> Thus, the songs need not literally bring the past to life for the viewer but give the impression of such an experience, creating a fictional set of memories that, especially when taken together with other such representations, may actually come to replace the audience's 'original' sense of the past. Of course, those who lack any other representation of the period will be all the more likely to assume that the representation in the film is 'true.'[34]

[32] David Shumway, "Rock 'N' Roll Sound Tracks and the Production of Nostalgia," *Cinema Journal* (Winter, 1999): 36-40.
[33] Ibid., 40.
[34] Ibid.

Shumway goes on to clarify that this is how other, non-rock 'n' roll sound tracks often work as well—by giving impressions of a time, place, or feeling. Again, *American Graffiti*'s sound track is not a realistic representation of what would be playing on a radio station in 1962, but an idealized sound track of hits spanning from 1955 to 1962. As such, it is another example of restorative nostalgia, in the same sense as the Cole Porter recording in *Midnight in Paris*.

I largely agree with the nostalgic model that Shumway presents, but his focus on the indexical nature of this music, the way it points to a specific time, takes precedent over considerations of the iconic, the way the music as sound (and reverb) generates a spatial resemblance. As such, he does not really clarify what makes rock 'n' roll nostalgia different from the sort of utopian nostalgia that Caryl Flinn has noted as a primary function of all film music.[35] I would argue, however, that what rock 'n' roll really does do for the first time is make semiotic use of some of the acousticonic properties of reverb and echo. The use of pre-recorded music whose distinctive sound is recognizable as being representative of a certain time and audience is translated through the character of echo and reverb on the recordings and in the diegetic spaces where these recordings are heard.

The power of rock 'n' roll spatiality is apparent in another observation that Shumway makes. He notes that there is generally only a loose diegetic connection between music and its source, most frequently the local radio station. In the film Wolfman Jack's station plays continuously, and much of the music, with the exception of that played at the school dance, is provided by car radios and loudspeakers at Mel's Diner. The music's volume sporadically and

[35] Flinn looks at how, curiously, diverse approaches to film music, classical, psychoanalytical, Marxist, etc., all appeal to music's utopian function; its ability to give the "impression of perfection and integrity in an otherwise imperfect, unintegrated world" (p.9). While forward looking utopias are possible, she explains that most films are nostalgia oriented and that most films use music as a way of affixing nostalgia to them (e.g. "Dixie" in *Gone With the Wind* or "As Time Goes By" in *Casablanca*). See Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

rather arbitrarily moves up and down, giving it a quasi-nondiegetic feel. That is, "Music doesn't come from particular places in the film's space; it pervades that space."[36] Yet it is the very fact that the recordings that make up *American Graffiti*'s musical sound track use a fabricated reverberant space that allows the music to pervade the space of the film in the first place. Without understanding that this music originated in a sonic "no place" constructed to connote rather than denote we cannot clearly determine why and how it might work to create a nostalgic effect, outside a generic observation that the music was recorded and released around the approximate time. In other words, in considering acousticonic qualities of these recordings, we might get a fuller understanding of what gives the sound track of *American Graffiti* its 1950s-ness feel.

One particularly notable attribute to the 1950s ambient sound of rock 'n' roll recording, highly influential in the music chosen for *Graffiti*'s sound track came out of both Chess and Sun Records 1950s recordings: the slapback echo.[37] Found in early recordings like John lee Hooker's "Walkin' the Boogie" (1952), Little Walter's "Juke" (1952), and Dr. Ross's Boogie Disease (1954), the effect had a further impact when it was added to lead vocals, most notably to Elvis Presley's 1954 cover of Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky." Until this point, echo and reverb were never used on lead vocals (aside from narrating voices). With the removal of this final indexical relation, the place of the singer (and thus by default the listener) becomes ambiguous, muddied, and frenetic. The reverberant, echoic voice recalls a whole slew of connotations—heroism, uncanniness, exoticness, and so forth—all linked to a learned, historicized use, but at the same time it creates its own particular meaning caught in a web of

[36] Shumway, "Rock 'n' Roll," 41.
[37] "A single, rapid repeat of the source sound, spaced with sufficient delay time to make the repeat clearly audible, but near enough in time to source to provide a rhythmic effect." Doyle, *Echo & Reverb,* 235 ff 6.

historical context.[38] In short, "the [sonic] fields have become momentarily deterritorialized, but not flattened out: the great potential energies and explosive differentials are poised, balanced in impossible creative tension."[39] While *American Graffiti* does not make use of any Elvis recordings, much of the music on the sound track participates in this tradition of fabricating sonic space.

A particularly noteworthy example is rockabilly star Johnny Burnette's version of "You're Sixteen." The instrumentation is impressive, with a vocal group, a small chamber group, and the typical rock 'n' roll instrumentation, electric guitar, bass, and drums, all of which have a rich reverberant quality whose decay allows harmonies to bleed from one to another. In addition, Burnette's voice has an echo effect that adds another layer of spatial quality. In the film, the song first comes over the radio in greaser John Milner's (Paul Le Mat) hot rod. The song speaks to the situation, as he pretends to have a crush on teenybopper Carol (Mackenzie Phillips), deceiving her into giving him her address so he can get rid of her. The added reverberation of the song becomes even more apparent in a cut to the next scene, now within the iconic Mel's diner, where an echo is added to the already present echo in the recording, and the reverberation of the empty restaurant doubles the reverb in the song. These doublings of reverb seemingly place the music within the diegetic space of the world, giving the impression that this music does in fact originate from it.

Doyle observes that part of rock 'n' roll's function was to reterritorialize, or reclaim and reimagine "teen" spaces: "street corners, milk bars, bus stations, dance halls, schoolyards,

[38] Ibid., 178-212.
[39] Ibid., 184-185.

playing fields, vacant lots, car interiors, back streets, fun parlors and so on."[40] So it seems this is what this music accomplishes: it sounds over the speakers at local burger shop. It emanates through the gymnasium at high school annual "Hop," and it passes from speaker to speaker of the cars various teens use in their joyrides around town. In short, it uses stereotypical music of the time in stereotypical places of the time as a way of restoring a feeling of 1950s-ness. These properties make a restorative nostalgic reading of the film particularly easy. At the same time, if we interpret the acousticonic features, through their doubling of utopian spaces, we see an alternative, more reflexive reading of the film.

Many of the spaces in the film are marked with reverberant and echoic qualities. The gymnasium in particular is a highly reverberant space, but surprisingly (and not particularly realistically), so is the parking lot at Mel's Diner and all up and down the streets. Shumway observes that these spaces are often pervaded by music, but they are also pervaded by echo and reverb of the diegetic space. Reverberant screams and laughs are constantly heard, bouncing off urban spaces, buildings and asphalt. Crucially, the radio gives the music another, extra level of spatialization, especially noticeable in DJ Wolfman Jack's voice. Most of the Wolfman's voiceovers include the same slapback echo that is the defining attribute of the music of the period. Chion's observation that Wolfman plays the role of "god as disc jockey" particularly resonates here, because of the echoic effect on his voice.[41] At once, it evokes a past use as a marker of the uncanny and the omnipresent, but at the same time its iconic relation to slapback evokes the teenage heroes of the period. In this world, Wolfman Jack is the king of radio as (the absent) Elvis Presley is the king of rock 'n' roll.

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[40] Ibid., 233.

[41] Michel Chion, "God Is a Disc Jockey," in *Film, A Sound Art*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (NY: Columbia University, 2009), 407-436.

Nevertheless, those soundscapes are themselves echoic and reverberant, and this creates an odd problem. For the diegetic space is marked by a valorized, utopian, reverberant spatiality, but so too is the music—and they are not the same. As I mentioned earlier, there is a doubling of reverberant space, both in the diegesis of the film and in the recording, but it results in a distorting of these utopias, exposing them as fantastic constructions rather than reality. *American Graffiti* is an attempt at rewriting the time before the Vietnam war, portraying an innocent generation as running away from the war that the audience viewing the film knows is looming. The film's restorative style exists as fantasy, as a way of marking the 1950s as a primordial "good" before a descent into the "evil" of the war.[42] The fabricated space of rock 'n' roll has come to mark this utopia, but its doubling in the film calls it into question.

"Phil"-ing Space: Reverb in *Dirty Dancing*

In contrast to *American Graffiti's* faux snapshot of pre-Vietnam America, *Dirty Dancing* frames its story as nostalgic recollection of its main character, Frances "Baby" Houseman (Jennifer Grey). As such, past in *Dirty Dancing* is not history but memory.[43] As memory, the past implicitly belongs to its subject, Baby, and, as personal memory, is liable to distortion, fragmentation, and misrememberance. Like *American Graffiti*, *Dirty Dancing* uses nostalgic stereotypes, especially in terms of music, but it combines the acousticonic spatialization heard in 1950s and 1960s recordings with that of 1980s recordings contemporary with the film's release. *Dirty Dancing* tends toward reflexive nostalgia, observable in the ways in which the text

[42] Shumway, "Rock 'n' Roll," 42.

[43] Siân Lincoln notes that as a text, *Dirty Dancing* is particularly embroiled in notions of nostalgia and memory in terms of: 1) production, that Eleanor Bergstein, the screenwriter, pulled heavily from her own memories of her teenage years, 2) context, that the film's diegesis is located in a socially radical time appealed to greatly during the political changes of the 1980s, and 3) consumer, that the film appeals to personal memories of those who came of age in the "Fifties" and "Sixties" as well as, currently, those who came of age in the "Eighties." See "The Production of Nostalgia: Introduction," in *The Time of Our Lives*: Dirty Dancing *and Popular Culture*, ed. Yannis Tzioumakis and Siân Lincoln, 203-206 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013).

juxtaposes acousticonic markers of time and place within popular music recordings throughout the film. Specifically, I will provide a detailed analysis of how these acousticons appear within the film text and how they function to support four different utopian ideals outlined below.[44]

Dirty Dancing is a coming-of-age story about Baby and her summer romance with Johnny Castle (Patrick Swayze), a working-class dance instructor employed at a Catskill resort in the summer of 1963. The film casts the resort as a sort of summer camp, a place where Jewish upper and upper-middle class families vacation for a matter of weeks, participating in various activities together. Social dancing is a particularly noteworthy activity promoted by the owner, Max Kellerman (Jack Weston), who encourages his waitstaff, young, Ivy-League Jewish men, to mingle with the daughters of guests. A clear divide exists between the waitstaff and the working-class (primarily non-Jewish) members of the staff like Johnny, whom Kellerman loathes. Although they fall for one another, Baby and Johnny keep their relationship a secret, given the possible reaction from both Baby's parents and Johnny's boss. Johnny is inevitably fired, however, when Baby reveals their affair. The film projects a utopian ending as Johnny comes back to the final night of the retreat to win Baby back.

There are two basic groups within the film, the affluent members and college-bound staff and the working-class staff. There are also two different temporalities represented by the sound track: 1963 and the "present," 1987. The music in *Dirty Dancing* has four generic functions, each overlapping with a time period or identity, and each defined by acousticons. Each of these act as a pole on one of two axes, that, one of identity and that of temporality, as represented in Example

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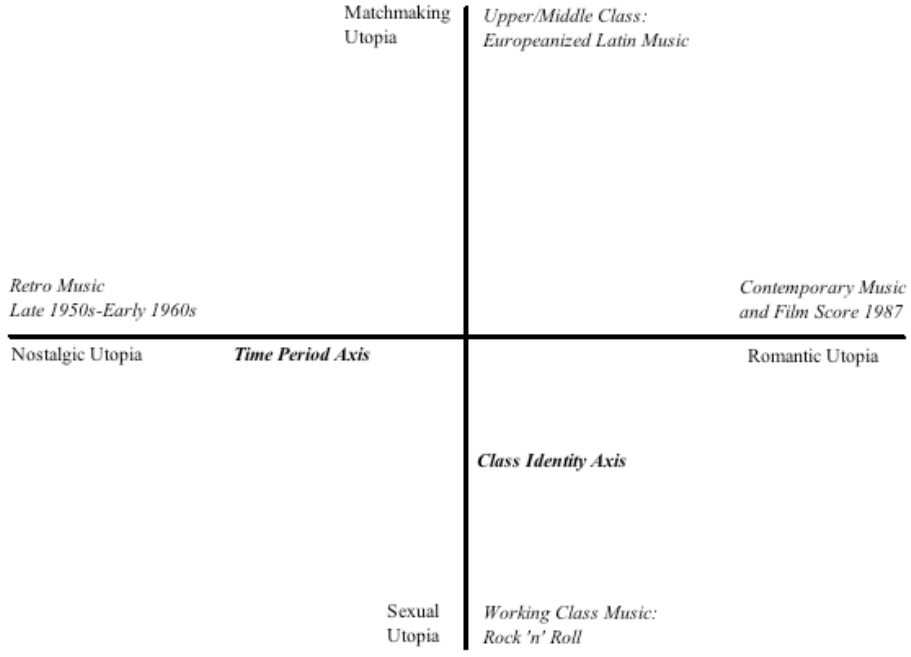
[44] Tim McNeilis makes a related argument in that there are compatible "musical elements" between the retro "Fifties" and current "Eighties" styles used throughout the film that keep stylistic disruptions to a minimum, although what constitutes a musical element is rather ambigous. "Dancing in the Nostalgia Factory: Anachronistic Music in *Dirty Dancing*," in *The Time of Our Lives*: Dirty Dancing *and Popular Culture*, ed. Yannis Tzioumakis and Siân Lincoln, 239-258 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013).
In my close readings of scenes below, I suggest that the similar uses of reverb are one such musical element.

3.1. In the following section, I will interpret each of these four categories, the acousticons associated with them, and they figure into the film proper. First, as in *American Graffiti*, music marks a specific time in the past, the summer of 1963, and so the film uses existing popular music from that time. However, unlike *Graffiti*, *Dirty Dancing* includes a score and music written concurrently with the film. The 1950s music sets a sort of nostalgic utopia, setting up this summer as one of the "good old days" that Baby is recalling. The 1980s music enacts a romantic utopia that defines Baby and Johnny's relationship. While music from the 50s and music from the 80s perform different utopic functions, these functions are fluid and often move in and out of diegetic and nondiegetic spaces. Together, the 1950s and 1980s music help to create a sense of reflexive nostalgia.



Example 3.1: Musical Temporal and Identity functions in *Dirty Dancing*

On the other axis is music that represents identities of upper class or working class, which is also mapped on to ethnicities of Jewish and non-Jewish. The upper-class music generally plays

for the resort's guests. This music is a mix of waltz, foxtrot, and importantly, Latin music. The film features the Merengue and, more frequently and with more narrative significance, the Mambo. As Collen Dunagan and Roxane Fenton have shown in their analysis, the film consciously invokes a European approved version of Latin music, and in particular, the Mambo.[45] Originally a Cuban dance from the 1930s and 40s, the Mambo quickly became popular as a dance style in the United States. However, the original Cuban mambo and the version that became part of American popular culture were very different. The former was marked as hypersexual, overly expressive, and primal while the latter subdued these embodied codes:

> In the European-based forms that were considered acceptable, partnered dance sequences included held torsos, a standard embrace with limited body contact, verticality, and an emphasis on the feet as the most active body part. In these dances contact between partners was concentrated in the hands and arms, while gender roles dictated that the woman follow the man's lead. In contrast, dances arising within African American communities and those imported from Latin American countries (such as Cuba) have involved action in more of the body, and have therefore been viewed as both more emotionally expressive and more sexual. These non-European dance forms tend to incorporate the movement of the torso, as well as the arms and legs, and articulate the body through isolations that correspond to the syncopated rhythms of the music. In addition, the partnering in these forms included closer stances and greater torso contact than in the European-American style. They also allowed partners a greater degree of independence within the dance.[46]

Dunagan and Fenton note that the Mambo style danced in the film falls into the European-based form, a sort of professionalized rendition processed for Europeans and European Americans by professional dancers like Vernon and Irene Castle earlier in the century.[47] This Europeanization

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[45] Colleen Dunagan and Roxane Fenton, "*Dirty Dancing*: Dance, Class, and Race in the Pursuit of Womanhood," in *Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, ed. Melissa Blanco Borelli (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 135-154.
[46] Ibid., 139.
[47] It is no accident that Johnny's last name is Castle, since it invokes the famous dance instructors, Irene and Vernon Castle, who, like white musicians performing black music, "'cleaned up' versions of black social dances for white

is also marked acousticonically in the film, since Europeanized Latin music always appears diegetically and never nondiegetically. It also performs utopian functions: a sexual utopia observed at a safe distance, and a matchmaking utopia, with socially approved matches.

The "European" style of dancing and music and dirty dancing is contrasted with music as first seen and heard in the working-class living quarters. This music fits the "rebellious" rock 'n' roll music now considered the definitive musical style of the 1950s and early 1960s. The dancing here is "sexually excessive…improvised, spontaneous, and both emotionally and sexually expressive."[48] Likewise, the music is noticeably louder than that in the ballroom, its sound explosive, and with a noticeable lack of reverberation. The two styles of music are juxtaposed in an early scene from the film.

It is during one of the first dance nights that Baby learns about Johnny. As Baby talks with Neil (Lonny Price), Max Kellerman's nephew, a mambo begins and Johnny and Penny appear. Neil labels them pejoratively as the "dance people." "They're here to keep the, uh, guests happy," he says. Happy here works as a double entendre as we later learn that older women pay for Johnny's attention. Even this approved music, however, seems to test Max's patience. Penny and Johnny occupy center stage and begin a flashy, Latin-inspired dance. Whether their dancing is too virtuosic or too overtly sexual, Max disapproves and promptly shuts their dance down.

Baby is intrigued, but Neil disapproves, noting that Johnny and Penny are there to sell dance lessons, not show off. Neil acts as Johnny's foil, which becomes apparent in the next two

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middle- and upper-class dancers." In Colleen Dunagan and Roxane Fenton, "*Dirty Dancing*," 136. For more on the Castles, see Susan Cook, "Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform: Respectability, Modernism, and the Social Dancing of Vernon and Irene Castle," in *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexulity*, ed. William Washbaugh (New York: Berg, 1998); Julie Malnig, *Dancing Till Dawn: A Century of Exhibition Ballroom Dance* (New York: New York University Press, 1992). Danielle Robinson, "Performing American: Ragtime Dancing as Participatory Minstrelsy," *Dance Chronicle* 32(2009).

[48] Dunagan and Fenton, "*Dirty Dancing*," 139.

scenes: one involves Neil and the other Johnny. After the mambo, Neil reveals that he is in charge of game night, and he invites to Baby to attend with him. Her father agrees for her, but the annoyed face Baby wears in the next scene—she is an unwilling participant in a magic show—implies that she wishes she could have stayed at the dance.

In the following scene, Baby runs into Billy, who is carrying watermelons up to the staff quarters. After coaxing Billy—guests are not allowed in the area—they both head into the staff quarters. Billy kicks open the front doors to reveal a dance party. Nearly everything about this party opposes the Max-approved dances in the resort. As seen in Figure 3.1, absent are cocktail dresses and suits and the upper- and middle-class identities they suggest. Teens drink cheap beers with their bodies pressed against one another, with sexually provocative arches and thrusts. But it is the music that really gives the feel for the shift in atmosphere. The Contours' 1962 hit, "Do You Love Me?" blasts into the foreground once Billy kicks in the doors. This music is different from the other diegetic music thus far. The reverberant space of "Be My Baby," the song that plays underneath the film's opening credits, is replaced by an in-your-face sound; "no place" becomes an "every place" and more. Indeed, the dialogue, usually taking center stage here, strains to be heard over the Motown-soaked sound track. The moment reaches a climax when Penny and Johnny enter, continuing to dance. The scene mirrors the mambo, where they occupy center stage again, but with no Max to shut them down. Next, Otis Redding's "Love Man" plays and Johnny offers his hand to a timid Baby, offering to teach her this new dance style. Slowly but surely she lets go and cuts loose. When the song ends, the crowd erupts in applause.

Figure 3.1: The Staff Dance to "Do You Love Me?"

The staff music and the resort music here are defined by their acousticonic opposition where the latter is marked by its clear diegetic placing. The music of the staffers, however, is much less diegetically defined; it is explosive and seems to break through the diegetic framing of the sound track. Both The Contours and Redding come from record companies with their own distinctive "sounds," Motown and Stax, respectively, and both associated in particular with black musicians. Doyle notes that some rock 'n' roll black musicians of the pre-1950s era did not make use of the slapback echo or reverbant techniques proliferating in rockabilly styles, particularly the music of Little Richard. "Little Richard's early rock 'n' roll sides present youthfully aggressive, sexualized, explosively disruptive recording presence" and as such Doyle claims, he "had no need for synchro-sonic slapbacks and cavernous reverb" because "the *spectacle* of Little Richard...did as much as the recorded sound to promote rock 'n' roll's 'hyperkineticity.'"[49] It should therefore come as no surprise that the hypersexualized, black music of this time period is employed here to mark the working-class staffers of the film as lower class and sexually

[49] Doyle, *Echo & Reverb*, 211.

uninhibited. Similarly, Motown music will accompany the explicit sexual encounters between Baby and Johnny later on.

In terms of nostalgia, the more pertinent examples come from music that explicitly represents the time period of the film, 1963, and the music contemporary with the release of the film, 1987.[50] The film frequently combines acousticons from one period with those of another. For example, the opening of *Dirty Dancing* superimposes 1963 with its contemporary production time. In the opening credit sequence, the handwritten font and hot pink color of the titles seem like a mash-up of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (1982) and *Miami Vice*, as seen in Figure 3.2. In any case, they give it a 1980s style. Behind the text of the credits, close ups of dancing teenagers unfold. These shots combine two nostalgic, visual styles. First, they appear in monochrome in contrast to the vibrant lettering of the credits and second, the dancing is shown in slow motion, perhaps suggesting a reflexive or nostalgic mood.[51] While these stylistic features are clearly using affective resources to produce nostalgia, they themselves do not produce a sense of the early 1960s. Indeed, the time of the dancers is somewhat ambivalent in this opening sequence. Many of the shots are close ups, but women appear with short hair, big hair, and teased bangs. It is instead the sound track that reveals the temporal setting of the film. "Be My Baby" by The Shirelles blares in the foreground as the shots of dancing teens continue throughout. This music is not the music the teens dance to; however, given its upbeat tempo, on first viewing it appears to be nondiegetic music.

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[50] This is true for the audience contemporary to the release of the film, however, the cult status of *Dirty Dancing* means there is an added layer of nostalgia for the 1980s, a complexity investigated in Clair Molloy's recent essay "'It's a Feeling; a Heartbeat'" Nostalgia, Music, and Affect in *Dirty Dancing*," *The Time of Our Lives*: Dirty Dancing *and Popular Culture*, ed. Yannis Tzioumakis and Siân Lincoln, 223-238 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013).

[51] Grainge, *Monochrome Memories*.

Figure 3.2. Opening Credits to Dirty Dancing

Only near the end of the credits does it become apparent that "Be My Baby" is apparently being played over a radio station. Disc jockey Cousin Brucie's voice is heard observing that this summer of 1963 is one full of summer romances before announcing the next "great song," "Big Girls Don't Cry" by The Four Seasons. At this point, the sound track moves us clearly into the diegetic world of 1963. First, the music continues along with the sounds of swishing cars as the image track reveals the Houseman family on the road towards the resort. Second, Baby's voice is heard for the first time as nondiegetic voiceover, explicitly stating what the opening credits implied: this is a recollection of the past. It is only once the family pulls up to the camp that "Big Girls Don't Cry" moves into an ambient position, mixing with the sounds of tires on gravel and chattering campers before finally fading beneath an overhead loudspeaker recounting a list of current resort activities.

As in *American Graffiti,* these opening songs perform two primary functions: they help set the time period of the film, and they provide commentary about the characters and narrative.

As Shumway argues, popular music allows for a very specific reference to the past, and he claims that although *American Graffiti* and *Dirty Dancing* occur during the same time frame, 1963, the latter uses music more likely to have actually played in the summer of 1963. While this might be true for "Big Girls Don't Cry," released the prior year, "Be My Baby" was not recorded until July of 1963 and was not released until August. Since the song supposedly plays at the beginning of the Resort trip it is slightly anachronistic, albeit barely. However, the song is appealing given that its title and chorus, "Be My Baby," share the name of *Dirty Dancing*'s title character, Baby. As Anahid Kassabian points out, both songs help to "[set] up the entire film: Baby is going to learn to mind being called Baby, she is going to find a guy as great as her dad (maybe greater) and liberal politics will have something to do with her accession to adulthood."[52]

There is, however, another reason that "Be My Baby" serves as a suitable choice for the opening song of the film, despite the anachronism: it has the *sound* of an early 1960s recording. More specifically, "Be My Baby" is the quintessential example of Phil Spector's "wall of sound" technique. Spector's "wall of sound" was a combination of instrumentation, microphone placement, and reverberation. First, he would double or triple instruments in the studio, particularly keyboard instruments, as a way of expanding the sound. Secondly, he would space instruments across microphones so that they would bleed from one to the other. Finally, all this sound was captured and pushed through the reverberant space of the studio's bathroom. These practices resulted in the powerful, highly-recognizable sound that Spector produced, and many artists sought to record at his studio in LA.[53]

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[52] Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 78.
[53] Zak, *Poetics of Rock*, 77-85.

This sound contrasts quite a bit with the 1980s scoring in the film, which also uses reverb, but in a different way. Many of these songs, notably "She's Like the Wind" and "Hungry Eyes," make use of what has come to be known as the "Phil Collins" sound, first used on a Peter Gabriel album on which Phil Collins was the drummer.[54] But Collins made the sound famous on his following album *Face Value*.[55] "The dramatic drum entrance on 'In the Air Tonight,' the album's first hit single, assured that recordists everywhere would take notice and that many would seek to emulate what was known at the time as 'the Phil Collins drum sound.'"[56] With little exception, all the music from the time period makes use of the Phil Collins sound on the drums, and thus it is most often used to represent the romantic utopia shared by Baby and Johnny.[57]

Like *American Graffiti*, *Dirty Dancing* has a doubling effect of its reverberation, but it is carried out through the juxtaposition of reverberation acousticons that represent the 1960s and 1980s. Usually, as I have outlined in the opening scene, the doubling occurs in superimpositions of one temporality in the image track and another in the sound track. Another is the diegetic/nondiegetic play with the use of "She's Like the Wind," a contemporary recording performed by Patrick Swayze. The song occurs as Johnny, played by Swayze, leaves the resort, creating an odd diegetic/nondiegetic doubling of the representation of the past and future.

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[54] According to Zak, "Exaggerated drum ambience was introduced to the rock mainstream by the success of Peter Gabriel's third album. Steve Lillywhite and Hugh Padgham, who had been experimenting with reverberant drum sounds in a stone-lined room at the Townhouse studios in London, where enlisted in 1980 as producer and engineer, respectively for the Gabriel project." Other than that "gates and filters" were applied to the drum sound, not much else is known. For more, see *Poetics of Rock*, 79-82.

[55] Ibid., 79.

[56] Ibid.

[57] There are some exceptions, where some 80s music is used diegetically, though its level is so low its production period is indiscernible. One notable exception is Merry Clayton's "Yes," which notably lacks the 80s drum sound altogether. However, represents Baby's sister, Laura, on her way to lose her virginity to Robbie.

However, the exemplary moment of this juxtaposition of times occurs in the final scene of the film.

The retreat is coming to a close and, as a final farewell, Max Kellerman puts on a pageant including staff and resort members, which closes with an anthem of Kellerman's own design. The lyrics reflect the general sentiment of the film: "Summer days will soon be over, soon the Autumn starts." As things come to a close, Kellerman tells his bandleader how the resort will not be reopening. "Kids don't want to go to resorts with their parents anymore, they want trips to Europe. Twenty-two countries in three days," he says before admitting, "It seems like it's all slipping away." At this point Johnny enters and, upon finding Baby, resolves that he is going to do his final dance, but he's going to do it his way, with his partner, Baby. The final number, "Time of My Life," is performed by Bill Medley.

Shumway notes that this is the most pivotal moment in the film, and it sets *Dirty Dancing* apart from *American Graffiti* because it combines the old with the new. While Shumway connects the old with the new by recognizing that Bill Medley is one of the Righteous Brothers, there is more to this production than that. Phil Spector was the producer on most of the Righteous Brother's hit records. He produced "You've Lost that Loving Feeling," later to be resurrected for the film *Top Gun*, released the year before *Dirty Dancing*. The deeply resonant tone marked by reverb recalls Spector's "wall of sound." "Time of My Life" takes that sonic signature of the 1950s-60s Phil Spector sound and weds it to the explosive, no-space Phil Collins drum sound. Unlike the doubled spaces of *American Graffiti*, these two resonate with one another. They give a semblance of a partial past, partial present; they give acousticonic form to a reflexive, nostalgic memory.

The placement of the song in the film achieves a utopian, musical status in that it occupies both the diegetic and nondiegetic space of the film. The moment is curious, as we logically assume the 1980s sounds cannot exist in the 1960s. And yet, we see Johnny and Baby dancing along to its rhythm. Before long the entirety of the staff and resort members join in and dance as well. At one point Max turns to his bandleader to ask if "they have sheets for this," and Johnny begins to mouth the words of the song to Baby as they dance. Kassabian asserts the ending as comparable to a feminine ending in music. It is an impossible, storybook ending, a utopian fantasy. Everyone dances, Mr. Houseman apologizes to Johnny, and, most importantly, Baby finally sticks the lift, at the end of her dance with Johnny.

CONCLUSION

Both *Dirty Dancing* and *American Graffiti* use connotations of the fabricated space of their respective past periods, the early 1960s, to invoke nostalgic moods and modes. *American Graffiti* tends towards the restorative and *Dirty Dancing* towards the reflexive. The former's doubling of reverberation distorts utopia, while the latter's juxtaposition of reverberation magnifies its utopian power. In both cases, it is the acousticonic properties, the connotative power of spatiality within musical recording, which invokes the nostalgic and allows for the restorative and reflexive readings. *Dirty Dancing* fabricates acousticons of pastness alongside acousticons of presentness to create patinas, whereas *American Grafitti* attempts to use acousticons of past spaces attached to music in acoustical spaces of past teenage innocence (e.g. dance halls, burger joints, car radios). In each case, however, the recording brings with it its own acousticons of space that effect how they might be interepreted, once placed within the filmic

sound track. As we will see in the next chapter, acousticons are not limited to film, nor are they limited to recordings.

Chapter 4: The Acousticon, The Hyperreal, and Audio Branding

In a recent trailer entitled "Horizon," Dolby Laboratories advertises Dolby Atmos, its new line of theatrical sound systems that was released in April 2012. According to a promotional article, Atmos delivers what Dolby 5.1 and 7.1 originally promised, "creating truly immersing and lifelike audio." The article claims that audiences "can now enjoy a completely new listening experience with enveloping sound that brings the stories on screen more fully to life."[1] In its trailer, "Horizon," Dolby Laboratories display these new features by comparing them to older conventions. Both the sound track and image track begin with an explosion of information. As the sound track erupts with various unplaceable sounds, the image track plays frantic snippets of disparate shots run in reverse: a waterfall, a sports car, a guitarist on stage. Then, almost as quickly the image track plunges into darkness and the sound track dissipates to nothing. There is a deliberate overflowing of the audiovisual senses, evocative of a theatrical sound test, followed by silence and darkness.

After this whirlwind introduction, the trailer divides into two parts. The first part shows how theater sound *used* to be, before Atmos and the second part shows would it could be with the Atmos technology. The first part begins with snippets of various soundscapes—the American southwest, a rainstorm, and a cheering crowd at a rock concert (Figure 4.1). Perhaps more important than what it portrays is *how* it portrays. Bland, lifeless colors and unfocused lenses stylize the visual images that accompany these soundscapes, as well as an eye lens filter. A voiceover accompanies these images, stating: "Right now, you're listening to where cinematic

[1] "Dolby Atmos: Next-Generation Audio for Cinema," *Dolby Studios* 3 (2012): 1.

audio has been. Because we are so used to hearing sound this way we don't notice that it is merely a fraction of what it could be." The sound track is noticeably empty after the initial flooding of the senses. A single melodic gesture on piano reverberates in this now stark audible field, though a muffled, possibly synthetic chorus doubles it. To add to this starkness, a subtle rustle, like wind blowing through a desolate desert also sounds. The wind and stark piano accompany a partly obscured, color-drained image of the desolate American southwest. The image track then cuts to rain drops falling, and the sounds of wind disappear as droplets of rain splash against the edge of a cliff. Although rain falls all around, only the patter of a few drops sound in the center of the track. Even those droplets, however, sound distant and muffled. Next, we see an electric guitarist on stage during a rock concert—or at least a semblance of a guitarist, since the image blurs to make out any distinct attributes. Like the image track, the sounds are also blurred. Although the shot implies an immersion within the crowd, only a few cheers and claps can be heard, and they have been treated with so much reverb that they sound as if they are coming from far away.

Figure 4.1a: Desert shot from Part 1 of Dolby Atmos "Horizon" Advert

Figure 4.1b: Rock concert shot from Part 1 of Dolby Atmos "Horizon" Advert

Both the image track and the sound track have some distinct features that work to undermine the "realness" of the audiovisual image. All three images are colorless and, more importantly, they frame the image with a lens iconically shaped like a human eye. This eye framing narrows the visual potential of the screen. While the center of the image in each is clear, it blurs at the periphery. At the corners of the frame, the eye lens completely obscures the image. The acousticonic framing works similarly. The music and sound effects are stark. Moreover, they are mixed in ways that undermine their presentation in the image track. The emptiness of the desert soundscape following the explosion of sound from the introduction calls attention to the deserted space in the sound track. The rain droplets present a few distinct patters in the right speaker while a lower mixed, generic rain sound emanates from the left speaker. However, only a few drops fall in the foreground of the image, straight through the center of the shot, yet these close drops sound as if they come from a different place. The rock concert shot gives the impression of crowd immersion, and yet only a few hand claps sound from the center of the track, rather than cheers and applause all around. The voiceover explicitly calls attention to these details. It says that this is the space where sound has been and that this constructed space is so

naturalized that we do not realize how much more realistic, how much more animated it could be. Taken together, the sound and image track work to subtly undermine the audiovisual contract. Compared to the audiovisual overload in the introduction, these images seem to be lacking.

In stark opposition to the first half of this trailer, the second half simulates how sound with the Atmos system "could be," and it does so with a portrayal of the future. As seen in Figure 4.2a, a CGI image of Earth appears along with a high-pitched, and focused, digital ping as a satellite whirs by. As it passes, a low rumble takes over the sound track, and a spaceship appears in the upper part of the frame. Directly following, the images from the first part now appear at greater length, in full frame, and in color. A sports car now drives through the southwest; the rock concert reappears but now from an elevated perspective. Simultaneously, the voiceover continues to describe Dolby Atmos as "deeper," more "authentic," and "more dimensional."

Figure 4.2a: Spaceship flies overhead in Part 2 of Dolby Atmos "Horizon" Advert

Figure 4.2b: Car races through desert in Part 2 of Dolby Atmos “Horizon” Advert

Figure 4.2c: Rock concert in Part 2 of Dolby Atmos “Horizon” Advert

The trailer, however, raises some curious issues. For those not viewing the advertisement in an Atmos theater, the features it is selling do not exist in the medium in which the advertisement appears. Therefore, Dolby must use the capacities of an old system to simulate or represent the new one. The re-representation of the rock concert is perhaps the most striking example. The claps, at first dampened and far off, suddenly appear much closer in the foreground. Now that more of the audience is visible, the volume and density of the crowd sound is also exponentially higher and comes from every direction. Notably, it is this audiovisual image

that appears with the voiceover's claim to authenticity. The constructedness is also noticeable in other clips, as well. The voiceover claims that, when it returns to the stark landscape of the southwest, Atmos is "more subtle." Yet, no sound, other than nondiegetic music, actually sounds in this scene. The "more subtle" sound is not a rustle; it is silence. Instead of offering an Atmos version of rain drops, the trailer replaces the water image with the powerful image and sound of a waterfall. Perhaps the most striking moment occurs during the very first shot of the second part of the trailer with the spaceship flyover. In contrast to showing where sound has been, the trailer constructs an imagined space of where sound is going in the future. However, in order to animate the reality of this future, it must rely on conventional sonic figures of cliché futuristic objects in space.

The second part of "Horizon," then, "comes to life" not by using more realistic sounds, but by deploying acousticonic conventions that mark the first half with an "unreal" set of binary oppositions (uni-dimensional, shallow, inauthentic) and the second with a "real" set of those same oppositions (multidimensional, deep, and authentic). Yet the second part of "Horizon" is no "more real" than the first, but instead relies on drawing attention to film sound as fictive in the first half of the advertisement in order to give an illusion that the second half is, by comparison, real. By emphasizing the constructedness of the supposed "natural" connection between sound and image, the Dolby trailer attempts to conceal the fact that the "multidimensional" space of Atmos is also a constructed sound.

The constructed sound of film (that is, recorded sound), is a fixture in our everyday lives to an extent that "theater sound" is often very much of our lived experience whether inside or outside of the theater. Indeed, Dolby is not a constructed sound relegated only to the world of theater sound, but also to home sound systems, music sound systems, and more recently mobile

devices. Thus, the sound experienced in the confines of a theater and the sound worlds outside of the theater, though we might categorize these experiences as separate, in fact have coalesced. And when we add film sound to the much larger category of a type of recorded sound, constructed sound appears everywhere: on televisions, through laptop speakers, in our cars, in shopping malls, on airplanes and so on. We are living in what Michel Chion calls a mediated acoustical reality.

> The [mediated acoustical reality] has no difficulty supplanting unmediated acoustical reality in strength, presence, and impact, and bit by bit it is becoming the standard form of listening. It's a form of listening that is no longer perceived as a reproduction, as an image (with all this usually implies in terms of loss and distortion of reality), but as a more direct and immediate contact with the event. When an image has more presence than reality it tends to substitute for it, even as it denies its status of image.[2]

Chion, that is, observes that mediated acoustical reality is becoming the normative human experience of sound, rather than "unmediated." Unmediated is perhaps not the correct term here, as any experience is a mediated one at some level, but rather because those levels of mediation have become so naturalized they escape our notice. And this is exactly what Chion's concept of mediated acoustic reality is doing; its diffusion into our everyday lives, its constant presence are shifting what were once marked as "mediated" experiences to "unmediated," replacing the latter with the former. Mediated acoustic reality is exemplary of the hyperreal. Jean Baudrillard discusses the idea of the hyperreal in relation to the notion of simulacra and simulation.[3] Simulacra, representations of the real, come to replace the real in a process he defines as simulation.[4] Hyperreality is a symptom of simulation; signs have gradually detached from their

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[2] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), 103.
[3] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
[4] Ibid., 2-3.

referents such that today simulation "is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."[5]

Baudrillard considered the whole of film and television production as exemplary of the hyperreal, and acousticons are no exception. For, in their filmic context, acousticons exemplify in film what Umberto Eco has identified as two *sine qua nons* of American advertising: they emphasize "the real thing" and offer "more."[6] Dolby's claims of Atmos as "deeper," "more immersive," and "more authentic" exemplify Eco's sentiment and Chion's claim of image as more real than the reality it stands for. In the case of acousticons participating in the added value of rendered sound, they often appear "more real than the real," or hyperreal.[7] For in the age of the simulacrum, what emerges is a hyperreal, where a simulation does not merely feign likeness, but "fail[s] to copy at all," and instead "functions in the absence of corresponding real things which could serve as models for pretended likenesses represented by simulacra."[8] Baudrillard's quintessential example of hyperreality is Disneyland. In his analysis of Disneyland, he finds the "real" America within the walls of the park.[9] Yet the park is, in fact, represented as fantasy and the bounds outside the park, the parking lot, Los Angeles, and the rest of America is "real life." That is, Disneyland "is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest [Los Angeles and all of America] is real" when, in truth, it is Disneyland that is the real.[10].

Yet Baudrillard's language is tinged with regret and loss of the real to signs of the real through simulation. Like Frederic Jameson's mourning of the post-modern condition

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[5] Ibid., 1.
[6] Umberto Eco, "Travels in Hyperreality," in *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt and Brace Company, 1986), 7-8.
[7] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 138.
[8] Ibid., 17.
[9] "But what attracts the crowds the most is without a doubt the social microcosm, the religious, miniaturized pleasure of real America, of its constraints and joys," Ibid., 12.
[10] Ibid., 13.

encapsulated in the nostalgic mode, here Baudrillard seems to long for an era before the order of simulation.[11] However, it is not clear whether such a time actually ever existed. This bleak outlook is not one ubiquitously shared among scholars, some of whom have pointed out that in many cases the effects of such simulation are benign, or even positive.[12] In his article, "Plato and the Simulacrum," Deleuze refutes the positioning of simulation as the degradation of a copy. For him, simulacra are not copies of copies, but instead are something else. The notion of copy—original and the representation of the ideal—and the true ideal hold up a false sense of reality that never was; simulation refocuses attention toward sensation. That is, the primary issue is not how real some image is or is not—everything is image—but instead what impression it gives and what its affective power may be. Acousticons are simulacra, not copies. They signify through resemblance, through iconicity, like copies, but their power lies in their *difference*. For Deleuze, then, simulacra, simulation, and the hyperreal do not necessarily lead to an annihilation of the real, because the real was and is always already subsumed by simulation; instead we may recognize, through difference, two or more simulations.[13]

In what follows, I consider the acousticon in two realms of simulation: one springs from the hyperreal use of the acousticon in advertising and the other from our daily lives in acousticons of product sound. These considerations will provide a useful perspective on how acousticons resonate in the daily lives of consumers, both in audio and audiovisual advertisements and in product use and experience. First, I will consider how acousticons function

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[11] Brian Massumi, "Realer than Real: The Simulacrum According to Deleuze and Guattari," *Copyright* 1 (1987): 90-97.

[12] Gilles Deleuze discusses the nature of the simulacrum at length, returning to Plato's framing of the simulacra and copy in terms of a good and bad defined by the sorting mechanism of the Ideal. If all that there is is simulation, the question is no longer about a "more truthful" copy, but about experience and event. The affect created through simulation. See, "Plato and the Simulacrum," *October* 27 (Winter 1983): 45-56.

[13] Brian Massumi, "Realer than Real."

in terms of audio branding, and how companies often utilize them and their semiotic properties, both in advertisements as well as in product sounds. I look at what a brand is and how the notion of the brand relates to the logo. From here, I turn to Celia Lury's theory of the semiotics of the visual logo as a face of the brand, u birder ti exanube its aural counterpart, the sonic logo. Finally, I show how the sonic logo manifests, using acousticonic properties, not only on the production end—the brand identity in the form of audiovisual ads—but also on the consumer end—how products are inculcated with the values and associations of the brand.

BRANDS, LOGOS AND THE FACE

When we think of a brand, what comes to mind? Probably, it is the name of a large company, McDonalds or Nike for example; or some visual icon, the Golden Arches or the Nike swish; or perhaps a slogan, "I'm lovin' it" or "Just Do It." Maybe we think of particular branded products, the Big Mac or High Tops, or iconic personalities associated with these products, Ronald McDonald or Michael Jordan. More broadly, a brand is an image with respect to which we align some aspect of our identities and our lifestyles. Brands are thus an entanglement of products and consumers and, historically, although product differentiation remains important, companies have become more and more interested in the lives and values of their consumers as another means of driving consumption. Needless to say brands often involve sound design, usually at many different levels. Perhaps we think of a branded voice, like Dennis Haysbert's voice for Allstate Insurance, or a jingle, like Kit-Kat's "Gimme a Break," or even a product soundscape, like the atmosphere of jazz reverberating through the open space of a Starbucks.

Whereas in the early 20th century companies sold products, from the 1960s to the present companies moved towards marketing *lifestyles* as a means of increasing profit margins and

customer loyalty. This shift can be observed in two ways. First, the ongoing development and emphasis on consumer reports, and secondly, the rise of "hip consumerism."[14] The 1960s saw the rise of counterculture, a culture that is often painted as a monolithic resistance to the dominant culture. As Thomas Frank argues, however, it marks a shift in ideology that in order to be creative, one cannot conform to the norm.[15] Those taking part in this counterculture occupied various positions, some of them as advertisers, advocating a new way of selling products: making their product desirable for the youth market. Advertising companies thus began to rethink brands as more than a way of individuating products—brands became a way of accruing *value*, particularly social value. As such, advertisers began to personify brands, giving them a social identity.[16] Instead of focusing on traditional economic models, companies began to focus on the everyday activities of their consumer's lives. As Adam Arvidsson asserts:

> Companies become more interested in everyday actions and practices of the consumer, *external* to the products companies sell, and understanding them so that they may *communicate* with consumers more directly. This knowledge of the consumers' everyday life allows companies to *add to* or *reproduce* the particular qualities that their brand embodies, which is what consumers pay for access to.[17]

As companies began to think more and more about brands as a cultural sign appropriated by individuals for value, affective and attributable meanings, they began to focus on ways to create and manipulate the sign value of their brands. But how do companies go about reproducing and inculcating their brand with the values of their consumers? In order to answer this question, we will need to reassess what a brand is.

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[14] Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1-33.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 67. Original emphasis.

So far, I have used the term "brand" to encompass many things: production, logos, slogans, personalities, and products associated with a company, as well as consumption, the values, lifestyles, activities, and events of consumers of the brand. There are also the more inconspicuous parts of a brand. For instance, employees—factory workers, engineers, marketers, salespeople, etc.—are part of the brand, often embodying values of the company in their occupational practices. Brands may also mix and interact. Adopting celebrity personalities—a famous athlete, politician, or singer for instance—may help a brand accrue value. As brands interact and combine it can be difficult to discern where one company's brand starts and the other's begins. In fact, a brand seems to function as a unifying mechanism, a way of bringing all these various pieces, sometimes occurring over multiple nations and multiple centuries, under a familiar banner.[18] Celia Lury considers the brand as a complex object, a multipoint or border of contact between producer and consumer. "The brand is what brings people together: it is the interface."[19] However, this interface is not in itself a tangible entity, but instead manifests in the particular form that we often think of first when envisioning brands: the logo. It is the logo "that makes the brand visible."[20] The logo is the *face* of the brand,[21] but as I will show below, it is more and more frequent that this face is complemented with something akin to a feeling: the sonic logo. The logo is becoming a feeling face.

Societies have used brands as logos to mark ownership, for example livestock and other material objects (e.g. pottery), for millennia. We might also consider the coat of arms worn by

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[18] Andre Spicer, "Branded Life: A Review of Key Works on Brands," in *Organized Studies* 31, No. 12 (2010): 1736-1740.

[19] Celia Lury, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 62.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 62. Lury here is invoking Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the face. The face as close-up, as affection-image. The logo provides an immobile surface, a white wall in which a series of micromovements, i.e. the various changing scripts, colors, or motifs may on a micro-scale, shift creating a sense of the black hole, the logo gazing back.

medieval knights, families, and communities as a logo. These early forms of logos functioned as an establishment of ownership of objects through branding, but also as a way of marking rank.[22] For example, a coat of arms often functioned to distinguish a knight's rank, especially lower ranked knights whose class status and property ownership might otherwise be indistinguishable from that of a merchant or, worse yet, a peasant.[23] In the latter half of the 19th century, with the rise of industrialization, logos began to function in a new way to help distinguish the plethora of product choices amassing in stores across the Western world. Instead of a symbol for an individual, family, or community, companies represented themselves with logos to distinguish their products from others. With the rise of the industrial age, assembly lines, and mechanical reproduction, a logo distinguished one company's product from other, similar products, and also communicated consistency of the product to consumers, predominately through "quality assurance."[24] There were sonic equivalents to these logos in the form of jingles—short melodies often providing the slogans or product descriptions—but these developed later than visual logos.[25] With the diffusion of radios in the 1920s, however, the jingle as a form of marketing became common. Indeed, a catchy jingle has "stickiness": the melody and words get lodged in patrons' memories, helping them discern one brand from another in a way that I will discuss in more detail below.

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[22] Ibid., 62.

[23] Barbara Tuchmann, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

[24] Lury, *Brands*, 63.

[25] The English beer, Bass, which used a red triangle to mark its product, is often considered the first company logo, which it registered. Jingles began to emerge in the 1890s, but General Mills' Wheaties jingle is generally considered the first successful one: "Have You Tried Wheaties?" which sounded over radio airwaves in the late 1920s. Whether these are firsts or not, they nevertheless indicate a large time interval separating the visual and sonic logo. However, there were precursors to the jingle that predated the notion of the sonic logo, See Timothy D. Taylor, *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 68-69.

However, much like branding as a whole, modern logos have changed quite a bit in the latter half of the 20th century. While they still differentiate between various companies' products, modern logos carry the additional weight of selling the lifestyle with which a particular brand is, or would like to be, associated. For example, I mentioned earlier that a television ad's car door slam may be specifically pitched to convey the message of "safety," much like the crisp crunch that attests to the freshness of a chip, or the sound of a particular body spray communicating the sexiness of its wearer. Beyond visual branding, a sonic logo connects sound to image so that even without a visual reminder consumers can be consistently reminded, even when they are not looking, of a particular brand.

The most effective way to get an audience to latch onto, remember, and associate a particular logo with a particular product and brand is to attach that logo to an easily recognizable musical fragment or signature sound effect that through constant repetition in various contexts becomes inculcated with the values and activities of the consumer. The sound of the Apple or Microsoft start up, for example, may become associated with various computer activities for consumers. On the surface, brands make felt connections through repeating these sounds in various soundscapes of their brands, and the connection is purely conventional. But it is possible for brands, specifically through sonic logos and other forms of audio branding, to take on indexical and iconic properties.

A Semiotics of the Sonic Logo:

In discussing the logo as face of the brand, Lury introduces a Peircean framework to describe the logo.[26] Logos have a symbolic relation to their object, the brand. That is, the connection between brand and logo is conventional, established at an elementary level through repetition (i.e. the logo appears attached to various points of the brand: advertisements, products, etc.). However, in order for a company to increase its point of contact with target consumers, a successful brand also deploys iconic aspects of its logo. More specifically, the iconic personality of the logo is imperative to the branding process and the cultivation of its image, which is accomplished through the manipulation of the relationships of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness of a sign.

The firstness of a sign is a feeling, a state, a property so emergent that it is not entirely itself a sign but can be identified as part of a sign. Peirce's example is "redness." We cannot experience a pure state of redness because red is always a property of something else. Similarly, "loudness" might be thought to be the essence of firstness, since a sound is needed in order to experience a state of its loudness. Secondness is an existential experience of the object; the "realness" of a wall, for instance, is encountered by walking into it. It is the effect of a cause. The sound of a doorbell may be thought of in terms of secondness; an effect caused by the pressing of a button. However, once the connection is made that a person is waiting at your doorstep, you are already in the realm of thirdness. While there is a sense of immediacy in both firstness and secondness, thirdness is mediacy, reflection and/or comprehension of the cause and effect, a rationalization understood through past, present, and (potential) future experience. It

[26] Lury, *Brands*, 64-71.

belongs to the realm of culture. These modes of mediation are like the modes of the sign discussed in chapter one—icon, index, and symbol—in that they do not occur independently but are parts of a sign consumption/production process.

Additionally, they relate to the three modes of the sign where firstness, or quality is the basic relation of the icon, secondness and its existentialism the basic relation of the index, and the social meaning of thirdness is connected with the symbol. What is important here is that logos, as the faces of brands, may use the thirdness of a sign in order to inculcate its image with potential meaning at the level of firstness and secondness. For example, we may think of the redness of blood and the red in the logo of the Red Cross as an iconic connection whose iconicity is fashioned through the symbolic connection between the logo and the brand, signifying an organization bringing life-blood, hence humanitarian aid, to those in need. Sound may also have qualities of firstness, for instance loudness. The THX logo uses loudness, for example in its sonic logo, "Deep Note." Although originally meant as a sign of the quality of the theater that THX had approved for the contemporary moviegoer, "Deep Note" may also be understood as a symbol of the start of the movie experience and the quality of loudness inculcated with enthrallment. In short, logos may tweak the iconic properties of their visual and sonic logos as a way of expanding or concentrating the values associated with their brand. These iconic properties are easiest to digest in the simple forms of sonic logos, but they become implicated in increasingly complicated ways through various branded soundscapes.

Sonic Logos, Jingles, and Brand Songs:

In advertisements proper, there are several sound aspects that advertisers consider: sonic logos, jingles, and brand songs. Length differentiates these three categories, from logos as a short snippet of a tune to full brand songs. Yet, the borders between the three remain fluid as part of a

brand song or jingle may be drastically shortened or concentrated to become a sonic logo (e.g., the NPR theme or the Disney sonic logo), or the sonic logo may be incorporated into a jingle or brand song. However, although music plays a significant role as audio branding, it is not the only important sonic feature. Many sonic logos are themselves nothing but a sound effect (i.e. Taco Bell's gong or the Doritos crunch). Like other audio and audiovisual mediums, sound design is very important and thus sound effects in a short ad narrative can play a role in the brand message. Finally, voice can also play a fundamental part in branding, as, for instance, the use of a recognizable celebrity voice. The McDonald's "I'm Loving It" sonic logo originated as part of a Justin Timberlake song. Using Timberlake's voice in essence helped personify the McDonald's brand through the association with Timberlake's own brand.

A sonic logo is a short, audible sequence of sounds affiliated with a brand. It is meant to be the audio equivalent to the visual logo of the brand, though the connection between the two can vary widely. The ultimate goal of many sonic logos is to create positive buzz for the brand through a process of naturalization and positive status between the various parts of the brand. Companies go about this process in many different ways. Steven Keller, a CEO for iV—an audio branding firm—asserts that there are five measurable parameters to keep in mind when fashioning an sonic logo: congruence, distinctness, recognition, flexibility, ownability.[27] By congruence, Keller essentially means a sort of cross-domain mapping between the sonic logo and other non-audible components of the brand. Next, the sonic logo needs to be both distinct and recognizable. These two are related, in that the sonic logo needs to be distinct enough that it will not get confused with others. However, it also needs to have lasting power, like its longer form,

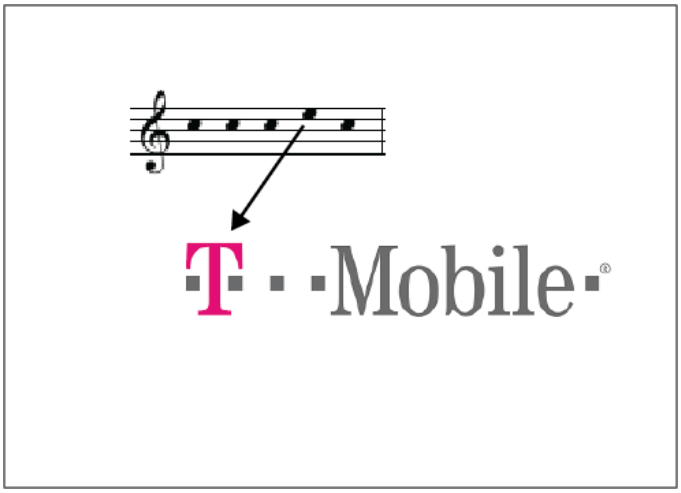
[27] Steve Keller, "The Business of Audio Branding – Midem 2013," February 4, 2013, video clip, accessed January 3, 1015, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3paKUjz9hXg

the jingle. It must be a voice distinguishable from the voices of other brands, but it must have flexibility, in tone, timbre, and range. In its balance between distinctness and flexibility, it is like a leitmotif rather than topic, in that it has its own distinct form and it is recognizably attached to some other meaning. The leitmotif works well as an example because the sonic logo must also be flexible: it must be able to fit into various sonic contexts and walk a fine line between recognition and overtness. Finally, the logo needs to be ownable. Pop songs for jingles might have an already accrued social meaning, but the cost of using a pre-existing song for an sonic logo quickly becomes financially problematic, since royalties must be played every time the sound byte plays, which adds up for companies who "naturalize" their sonic logo through repetition.[28]

Some logos use the sounds of their product or sound effect bytes as their sonic logo while others use short melodies, though all rely on repetition to naturalize the connection between brand and sonic logo. Due to the wide variation of sonic logo deployment tactics, as well as the varying symbolic, iconic, and indexical properties of sonic logos explored above, it might be helpful to consider sonic logos in terms of the acousticon. One primary way companies employ sonic logos is by reinforcing their iconic and indexical relationships with visual logos. Perhaps the most famous of these is the cross-domain relations of the T-mobile logos. The German company reproduces its visual logo in musical retrograde, as seen in Example 4.1. A large capital T interrupts a series of four evenly spaced dots, perhaps evoking Morse code. Each dot appears at the same level while the T stands taller, a fact that corresponds to the sonic logo, a series of repeated notes interrupted by a third note which appears a third higher. The sonic logo invokes

[28] Ibid.

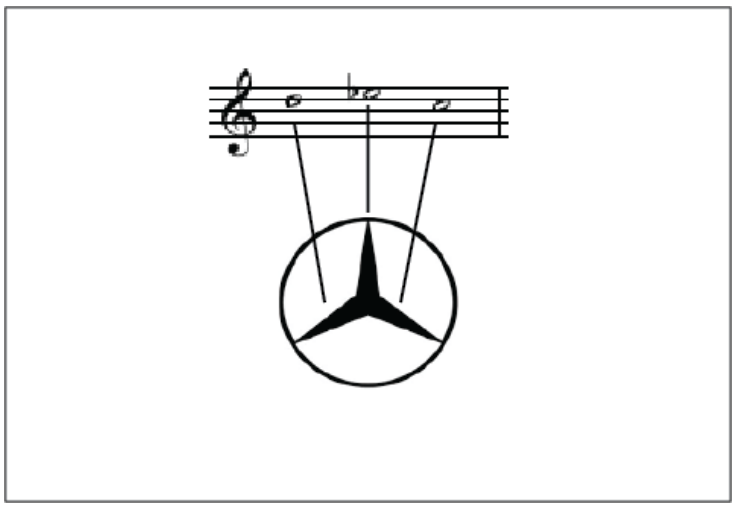
the visual logo and vise versa.[29] The German Mercedes-Benz sonic logo is another example, seen in Example 4.2, in which a three-note motif sung by a choirboy resembles the three-prongs of the Mercedes star logo. As Kai Bronner notes, "Choosing the angelic voice of a young choir boy presumably conveys associations like the Mercedes comes with a 'guardian angel from above' (safety driving) [which matches their slogan] 'The Star always shines from above." One of the major innovations of the new Mercedes brand design states that the visual three-pointed star logo always shines from above."[30] Many sonic logos also mickey-mouse their visual counterparts. Take, for instance, the Taco Bell logo. Even in its still form, the Bell is not still, but in a constant state of ringing. Many of the fast food chain's commercials end with its brand slogan, "Live Mas," and an animation of a ringing bell, complete with the sound of a gong.



Example 4.1 T-Mobile Visual and Sonic Logo

[29] Karsten Kilian, "From Brand Identity to Audio Branding," *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication*, edited by Kai Bronner and Rainer Hirt, (Madgeburg, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellshaft, Baden-Baden, 2009): 39-40.

[30] Kai Bronner, "Jingle all the Way? Basics of Audio Branding, *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication*, edited by Kai Bronner and Rainer Hirt, (Madgeburg, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellshaft, Baden-Baden, 2009): 79.



Example 4.2 Mercedes-Benz Visual and Sonic Logo

While many sonic logos might reinforce the visual logo, they might also directly connect to the product itself. The Doritos sonic logo is a reverberant crunch resembling the sound of biting into a chip. Like the Taco Bell logo it also accompanies the end of their commercials with an animation of its visual logo, which shakes as if moved by the strength of the sonic logo crunch. However, the Dorito logo has the added value of evoking its product each time it sounds. The Dorito crunch sounds more or less every time one consumes a Dorito chip, though the logo has been noticeably "sweetened." Another example is the Intel Inside sonic logo. Intel's logo, however, does not originate in the sound of a computer processor like the Dorito logo. Instead, Intel's logo reinforces an arbitrary relation through extended repetition. Intel Inside, through various deals, required computer companies who used its product to include its sonic logo as part of their computer's start up sound. Thus, the Intel sonic logo became part of many computer users' daily experience with computers. The sonic logo, then, may take many forms, but it must be relatively short and concentrated with information. It may draw connections to its visual counterpart through resemblance, or to the product. However, it is always a tangible type of unification allowing for the variation and discreteness between products, brand events, and so on.

The sonic logo, however, has its origins within earlier forms of sonic branding through jingles and popular music.

Just as branding has been a form of advertising throughout the 20th century, so too has music been a part of American marketing. In fact, Timothy D. Taylor argues that music, more than any other component, has conditioned the consumption landscape of American culture.[31] Music's employment across mass media platforms and in consumer spaces like department stores and shopping malls has its roots in the early 20th century. Music, both live and canned, sounded throughout department stores in the 1920s and 1930s, functioning as a sort of proto-Muzak.[32] In radio, popular music was abound and radio advertisers funded entire segments to promote a specific style of music, hoping to "generate good will" for their brand.[33] However, with the start of the Great Depression radio marketing strategies changed suit, shifting from the "good will" model to the "hard sell," which led to the rise of the "sticky" radio jingle. Jingles did predate radio, and as a marketing device, they have their roots in the late 19th century. However, as a mass marketing tool the jingle would not emerge until the late 1920s and early 1930s.[34] In the 1930s the jingle became the dominant form of music for advertising, which continued with the emerence of television in the 1950s. Notably, the lines between popular music and advertising music were never clearly delineated. Occasionally popular jingles became hits on Billboard (e.g. the Chiquita Banana song and, later, Coca Cola's "I'd Like to Teach The World

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[31] Taylor, *The Sounds of Capitalism*, 6.
[32] Bethany Klein, *As Heard on TV: Popular Music in Advertising* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 9-22. And Jonathan Sterne, "Sounds like Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Commercial Space" in *Music and Technoculture*, ed. René T.A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay Jr. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 316-345; L.L. Tyler, "Commerce and Poetry Hand in Hand: Music in American Department Stores, 1880-1930," *Journal of American Musicological Society* 45, no. 1 (1992): 75-120.
[33] Taylor, *The Sounds of Capitalism*, 23-26.
[34] Ibid., 68-73.

to Sing"),[35] while popular musicians sang jingles for companies (e.g. Elvis famously lent his voice for Southern Made Doughnuts in 1954).[36] The incorporation of popular artists in jingles and the jingle as a form of popular culture both reflect how the trend of "hip consumerism" of the 1960s affected popular music.[37] In the 1970s, with the help of the growing field of psychology, jingles turned away from attempting to inform customers about their product and instead tried to affect them, using music that could set a mood to generate a calculated emotional response.[38] By the 1980s the use of jingles was in decline, since they were at that time viewed as "unhip."[39]

Thus, the 1980s, saw a dramatic shift in marketing strategy away from jingles and towards employing pre-existing popular music in television advertisements. While popular music and the bands that wrote and played it had been attached to advertising in the past, for example lending their voices for jingles or their images as appearing on lunchboxes, this was the first time advertisers were actually overlaying their television commercials with the music.[40] Several factors added up to cause this change in advertising procedure. Politically, Ronald Reagan promoted consumption as positive for the American public. Companies began to support touring bands that, in turn, promoted these companies during their tours (e.g. Jovan's sponsorship of The Rolling Stones in 1981).[41] Finally, television had blossomed from its birth in the 1950s into the main form of media contact with the public by the 1980s, and with the explosion of cable networks and the rise of satellite television, producers were trying ever new ways to grab the

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[35] Ibid., 65-69.
[36] Phil Arnold, "Elvis and Southern Made Doughnuts," last modified on April 14, 2012, accessed May 12, 2014, http://www.elvisblog.net/2012/04/14/elvis-and-southern-maid-donuts-2/
[37] Klein, *As Heard on TV*, 43.
[38] Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*, 114-121.
[39] Frank, *Conquest of Cool*; Timothy D. Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*, 179-204.
[40] Klein, *As Heard on TV*, 41-78.
[41] Ibid., 19.

attention of audiences.[42] Specifically, the beginning of the decade witnessed the birth of MTV, a channel that, on the one hand, dedicated their content to popular music of a youth culture and, on the other, was conceptualized as a brand in and of itself.[43]

On August 1, 1981 MTV went on the air for the first time. Crucially, MTV blurred its content with its self-promotion, something that other stations did not do. Cuts between songs were unified with the ever-present MTV logo that helped congeal the MTV brand. As Catherine Johnson puts it, "this blurring of content (the music videos) and promotion was facilitated by the fact that MTV's programming essentially became a form of promotion for records themselves."[44] And while MTV was promoting something, it was no longer entirely clear whether that "something" was popular music or MTV. In summary, the 1980s saw the obfuscation of the boundary between "advertising" and "popular" music, a side effect of a larger shift towards branding as a way of wielding control of popular culture.

If the 1980s marked a blurring of the line between advertising music and popular music then the 1990s marked the obliteration of it. As musicologist Timothy D. Taylor puts it:

> Today's commercial musicians move fluidly between playing in bands; producing recordings; and making music for film, televisions, or advertising, taking their musical tastes and styles with them wherever they go. Sounds developed for advertising have found their way into mainstream popular musics, and vice versa, in what has become a constant interchange.[45]

In other words, the commercial musician is also a kind of brand. For Taylor, this branding process is two fold, encompassing the growing impenetrability of existing institutions of popular

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[42] Catherine Johnson, *Branding Television* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 15-36.
[43] Ibid., 17.
[44] Ibid., 19.
[45] Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism,* 8.

music as well as a changing relationship in advertising as a field of cultural production.[46] First, in terms of existing power structures, several platforms that had once been available for new musicians became less and less receptive. The multi-conglomerate Clear Channel bought up the radio industry, standardizing and enforcing playlists around the country. The same company bought up the majority of music venues across the country and forced artists into exclusive contracts for performing at their venues.[47] Simultaneously, MTV moved further away from showing music videos, instead creating more conventional television programing. Constricted by radio and MTV airtime as well as touring locations, many musicians were forced to turn to the new medium of commercials as the only avenue of mass promotion.[48]

Secondly, Taylor considers the shifting position of the advertiser in the field of cultural production. In addition to selling products, they now sell bands. Advertisers start to replace DJs as "trend-setters."[49] That is, they may not produce popular culture like musicians do, but they do mold its taste. For Taylor, contemporary advertisers are an example of Pierre Bourdieu's new petite bourgeoisie. Advertisers who fit in this category have a disposition towards what is trendy and creative, which is in the process of redefining capitalism. The notion of creativity here represents a new sort of currency for advertising "artists." These advertisers exemplify the new petite bourgeoisie in that they eschew high art and traditional advertising practices. That is, "it was also a reaction against what had been dominant in advertising music: music by trained musicians who were adept at scoring music for orchestras, bands, and choruses."[50] However, instead of producing "high art" or "mass culture," these new advertisers aimed at creating an art

[46] For the inmpenetrability of the popular music institution, see Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*, 208-218, esp. 208-212; for the changing field of cultural production, see 218-246.
[47] Ibid., 207.
[48] Ibid., 207-208.
[49] Ibid., 219.
[50] Ibid., 233.

form in between these categories, a goal that using popular music helped produce. And, importantly, those who write the advertisements no longer write the music, like the jingles in the earlier part of the century, but instead *present* the music. In effect, they become mediators between high and low culture because they have more cultural capital than those who mass produce art, but less competence and thus less prestige than those, like academics, who claim to have knowledge of (and control over the valuation of) "high" art.[51] Moreover, unlike a traditional understanding of art, which is more concerned with production rather than consumption (e.g. Milton Babbitt's infamous essay "Who Cares If You Listen?"), "the new petit bourgeoisie…is not necessarily involved with the production of goods, but is intimately concerned with how goods are made to insinuate themselves into people's lives."[52] Nowhere is this more clear than in their promotion of popular music—here, often limited to alternative, or indie label, music. Crucially, members of the new petite bourgeoisie, while critical of "mainstream" popular music for its ties to commerce, have no problem with promoting alternative musics because, as part of their ideology claims, they are helping struggling artists rather than those who have "made it." And, given the advertiser's position within the fields of class, power, and production, they are able to embed these ideologies within the existing power structure. As Taylor, again, astutely notes, advertisers act as educators for mass audiences through commercials, where they can disseminate their taste to others through the medium of music.[53] However, we should not confuse the new petite bourgeoisie with Bourdieu's:

> Today unlike what Bourdieu described in *Distinction*, the new petite bourgeoisie in the advertising industry and other parts of the cultural industries has managed to make its own ideology of the relationship to goods—the hip, the cool, the

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 234.
[53] Ibid., 237.

> trendy—increasingly dominant, growing but not yet replacing the bourgeoisie's use of art, but aligning itself with DJs, independent record labels, popular musicians, and so forth. The yardstick by which taste is measured is now more likely to be knowledge of the trendy than knowledge of high art.[54]

In other words, the battle between dominant bourgeoisie and the new petite bourgeoisie is over the content of knowledge. For Taylor, cultural capital has become a currency of cool rather than that of fine arts.

PRODUCT SOUND

On the other side of the production of audio brands in the form of jingles, musical collaborations, and logos is the consideration of how to brand the sound of the product itself. Product sound and sonic logos have something in common here in that they are usually the most common and most direct ways that a brand interacts with customers. And just like sonic logos, advertisers and designers give much thought to shaping and engineering a product's sound. However, the acousticon must be carefully considered here. As I stated earlier, considering acousticons in an audiovisual medium like film is easy because more often than not the entirety of sounds have been constructed. However, product sounds involve physical objects whose sounds may or may not be controllable. For example, many luxury car companies, and presumably their customers, care about the soundscape of the interior of their cars. The quieter the interior, the more serene the driving experience. However, functionally, cars have engines and in order to function, these engines are audible. Thus, on the surface we might say that the quality of the soundscape of a car's interior is acousticonic, whereas its engine sound is not. Then again, a powerful engine has come, at least partly through film, to signify virility and

[54]Ibid., 238

masculinity, and thus hearing the engine may also have a symbolic property to it. Additionally, the engine has a functional value for one trained to drive a car: if the sound increases, then the car is speeding up; if the sound decreases, the car is slowing down.

The acousticonic properties of a product sound, then, may depend on whether a sound is a necessary part of the product or if it is supplemental. In an article on product sound, Elif Özcan and René van Egmond suggest dividing product sounds into two separate categories: consequential sounds and intentional sounds.

> *Consequential* sounds are emitted by products as a result of their functioning. For example, hairdryer, vacuum cleaner, washing machine sounds are considered to be consequential sounds…Consequential sounds are often informative about the product functioning cycle and listeners cannot intervene their occurrence. *Intentional* sounds are designed, implemented, and put by a sound engineer. Microwave oven finish bells, alarm clocks, oven setting feedback sounds are some examples. They are mostly digital and somewhat musical sounds often used in user interfaces.[55]

Consequential sounds exist as an effect of a product's function and intentional sounds are those fashioned by a sound engineer. Although, the separation is somewhat useful in deciphering production intent, so it is not uncommon for designers to emphasize or deemphasize consequential sounds in order to improve interest in a product. For example, in a study for an unnamed coffee maker company, Klemens Knöferle found that consumers preferred certain coffee makers because they emphasized pleasurable noises (sizzling, crackling, and dripping) over unpleasurable noises (shrillness, rattling). While some of the unpleasurable noises are unavoidable, their "coloring" in a coffee-making texture may be altered for a more pleasing

[55] "Product Sound Design: An Inter-Disciplinary Approach?," *Undisciplined! Design Research Society Conference* 2008, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK, July 16-19 2008.

product.[56] Here again, the firstness, the iconicity, the qualities of sound that the advertiser will highlight or deafen in order to please the customer, becomes a priority.

In capitalizing on the more pleasurable sounds and de-emphasizing others, companies can edge out the competition in a given market. Advertisers learn to value the sonic counterpart to visual images in advertisements, whether through engineered sound effects, music composed for that product, the voices and sounds of popular musicians and actors, or any combination of the three. Companies learn that selling a lifestyle includes selling its sounds. Meanwhile, consumers hear the coffee pot's familiar sizzling, crackling, and dripping and think about "the best part of waking up." So far I have discussed branding and logos, particularly as they pertain to the sound effects and music of advertisements. I will now shift to a more in-depth reading of one particular commercial and its sounds, analyzing all of the musical and non-musical dimensions of its soundscape.

CASE STUDY: NICK DRAKE AND THE VW CABRIO

The 1999 commercial for the Volkswagen Cabrio has an acclaimed reputation in the advertising world, particularly for its use of music. Many point to it as the defining moment in contemporary television advertising. Some laud it as artistry, others scorn it for deceptive advertising, and still others praise it for its blend of both worlds.[57] My reason for considering this advertisement, however, has less to do with its status as art or commercial and more to do with its employment of sonic and musical acousticons. That said, that the commercial is deployed cinematically is important to the specific way acousticons are used throughout the commercial.

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[56] "Using Customer Insights to Improve Product Sound Design," *Marketing Review St. Gallen* 2 (2012): 47-53.
[57] For a historic account of Volkswagen's "Milky Way" campaign and the surrounding debate on ideology and aesthetics, see Klein, *As Heard on TV*, 44-48. Also, to a lesser extent, Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism,* 212-214.

Its use of cinematic convention, particularly its use of narrative, exemplify its status as a production of the new petite bourgeoisie and the blurring between commercial and non-commercial sound. A large part of the effectiveness of this commercial depends on the song "Pink Moon," what it stands for, and how it relates to other features of the sound track and the image track. As several sources note, many consider this commercial responsible for the revival of Nick Drake's music. Although prior to the commercial's release, certain popular bands (e.g. R.E.M. and The Cure[58]) claimed Drake as influence, it seems that his American popularity resurged with exploding record sales and greater exposure, after the launch of the Volkswagen commercial. And while some may assert that Nick Drake benefited greatly from the Volkswagen campaign, these narratives often forget to mention that the company also benefited greatly from "Pink Moon." Drake's position within the field of popular music made his music attractive to advertisers who found themselves in the role of trendsetters.[59]

Although Drake did not have a mass following, his music was popular in underground circles and had been identified by some popular musicians as a source of inspiration. His draw musically, then, was his artistic status and minimal popular culture exposure. Moreover, the present narrative of Nick Drake as a brilliant but struggling artist who battled depression because of his failure (and possibly took his own life because of it) epitomized the sort of musician that hip advertisers tried to support. In this case there was never any opportunity for Nick Drake to "sell out," since the artist had died decades earlier. Instead, Volkswagen's choice of his music could be read as homage to a forgotten musical genius that helped the company garner a positive reputation for helping Drake gain the respect he deserved. However, there are other reasons,

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[58] Trevor Dann, *Darker Than the Deepest Sea: The Search for Nick Drake* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 197.
[59] Taylor, *Sounds of Capitalism*, 226-229.

inherently musical reasons, that it was advantageous to use “Pink Moon” in the commercial, but in order to understand them we must first consider the advertisement in its entirety.

The advertisment follows four young adults on a moonlit drive to a house party who, upon their arrival, simultaneously come to the realization that they would rather keep driving, prompting them to leave immediately for the open road. It begins with an establishing shot following a river towards a bridge in the distance. Just as the camera reaches the bridge a car passes over it. A group of shots oscillate in and outside the car as it travels down a thickly wooded road with the moon visible through the branches. During the drive we are briefly introduced to four youths, two white men, a white woman and a black woman. Though they never speak, their enjoyment is communicated through their actions. The woman in the passenger seat smiles as she grasps at dandelion seeds through the open top of the convertible, the boy in the back steals a longing glance at the girl he sits next to while she takes in the sights and sounds of the night. When the group pulls up to their destination, a noisy house party, the four companions all exchange glances, put the car in reverse and head back toward the open road. The penultimate shot features a close up of the young white woman with wind-tossed hair as she ambiguously glances over her right shoulder. In the final shot, the Volkswagen logo appears in the foreground, replacing the moon while the twinkling constellation of Orion hangs in the background.

Crucially, the commercial adheres to brand consumerism: the advertisement is not really about the car, but instead about how the Volkswagen frames a desired lifestyle, one an owner of a VW Cabrio can afford. Less than half of the minute-long advertisement features shots of the vehicle, and, even in shots that do, the make and model are imperceptible. Instead, we are bound up with the desires and constructed experience of these four characters. We, too, want to enjoy a

moonlit ride with four friends where the pleasure of the experience is in the journey rather than in the destination.[60] However, what we specifically desire, although somewhat delineated by the producers, and what the commercial "means," are aspects we construct with our own experiences. The sound track, especially the music, plays a crucial part in this construction. With the music in the most prominent place in the sound track, it might indeed be possible to understand Nick Drake as a musical voiceover. However, unlike most dialogue, it is rather the aesthetic of the voice rather than its content that seems most pertinent here. That is, it is the soothing, clean quality of Drake's voice that appeals to the viewer more than what he is actually saying, itself acting as sign of Folk sound and as an artistic fingerprint.

In terms of lyrical content, Jeff Smith has argued elsewhere that viewers do not often interpret lyrics with the audiovisual experience but instead use the title or chorus to construct meaning about what they are seeing.[61] In this commercial, even if we are unaware of Drake's music (a probable situation if we consider its original context), the words "pink moon" occur a total of six times and the word "pink" is mentioned a total of fourteen times within the minute-long commercial. Here, the lyrics are oversaturated with this phrase just like the image track, which features the moon either in the sky or as illuminating the passengers in the car. That the moon is the most common image in both the lyrics and image track is not surprising, given that Volkswagen's logo takes the place of the moon in the final shot. However, while the absence of diegetic dialogue allows for the presence of Drake's musical voiceover, it disallows any linguistic mediation between the characters. This absence is noteworthy, since the narrative

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[60] "Commercial of the Decade: Nick Drake, 'Pink Moon,' and a Smart Little Volkswagen," last modified December 28, 2009, accessed May 14, 2014, http://thebrowntweedsociety.com/2009/12/28/nick-drake-volkswagen-commercial/

[61] Jeff Smith, "Popular Songs and Comic Allusion in Contemporary Cinema," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, ed. Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 407-432.

involves a shared experience between these characters, an experience that is most often mediated through speech. The absence of dialogue is most noticeable when the group pulls up to the party and each is able to communicate their desire to the other without saying a word. Their expressions say to one another: keep driving. By not allowing the characters to speak of this desire, the moment is infused with a sense of magic, or at least a moment of intense connection. And, furthermore, by not allowing the characters to speak, the designers allow viewers to make up their own meanings for whatever they believe is being shared. To locate the entirety of meaning in the image is, however, a mistake as both sound effects and the music play an integral part in the advertisement.

In lieu of dialogue, sound effects the song fills the sound track. First, the sound effects mimic those of the open road on a summer night: the swish of the car, the wind hitting their faces, and the chirping of crickets. Importantly, the sounds of wind and crickets are sounds of nature and evoke a sense of the bucolic, as well as a general sense of timelessness. These sounds occur on "the drive." The group's arrival at the house party marks an interruption in these sounds of serenity. Clamorous voices mix to form a blanket of babble, with only one discernable "whoo" from a stumbling partier. Again, as the group decides to keep on driving, the sounds of crickets return, eventually increasing in volume as the VW logo appears in the final shot. In the sound effects, then, we see a structure of stability to instability and back to stability through the use of conventional sound effects: chirping crickets and crowd ambience. While crickets have essentially become synonymous with themes of evening and pastoral, crowd ambience helps mark public spaces and disarray.

There is nothing inherently "bad" or "interrupting" about crowd ambience, but in this context it is clearly framed as a negative, because it is sandwiched between the peaceful, bucolic

night scene. I posit that this negative frame is in part due to social practices encoded in the music. That we might value the pastoral over a party in this situation has to do with the mood set by the music. A competent listener in American popular culture would understand "Pink Moon" as a folk song by its sound. That is, the instrumentation of voice and acoustic guitar, the singer/songwriter style, the strumming techniques, even the recording techniques inform the sound of the work as folk. Particularly, the recording's use of heavy reverb, especially noticeable on the piano, relate to reverb's nostalgic and utopian connotations, as outlined in Chapter 3. In the context of the genre of folk, the utopia specifically relates to an imagined, primal unity with nature. Folk music carries with it a set of ascribed values and ideologies. It is music whose naturalized technologies (acoustic guitar and voice) hearken back to earlier, idealized times. Similarly, it is a music that has become associated with the natural. In this sense a consonant/dissonant relationship occurs between the sound effects of crickets/crowds, with "Pink Moon" aligning as consonant and natural. Moreover, the singer/songwriter evokes an image of coffee shops where audiences listen in silence, as opposed to styles that encourage dancing or audience participation. In other words, folk music, and hence "Pink Moon," is not party music, it is a music that heralds the natural. It evokes a longing for an imagined, utopian past. The advertiser's aim is to use "Pink Moon" to mediate the personal affect, creating a nostalgic or more generally positive emotion in the viewer through socially encoded content. The values and ideologies ascribed to folk music, are a way of creating desire for an imagined way of seeing the world, a lifestyle. And by metonymy, that desired lifestyle becomes firmly associated with the Cabrio, making its acquisition deeply desired.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have approached musical conventions as not so much separate from, but as contained within a larger field of sonic semiosis. From this perspective we may see how music develops conventions in similar ways to other semiotic systems, but it also moves us closer to understanding how conventional musical signification functions in its own way. In film where music is but one among many interlocking semiotic systems, a more general model is not only helpful, but vital to understanding the many inextricable layers of meaning that make up the medium. Moving towards a more generalized model of convention formation like the acousticon allows for a more complete picture of how music operates as part of a whole sound track.

By acknowledging that musical semiosis spills out past its traditional boundaries, a new space opens that is rich for analytical inquiry. Recognizing potential conventional meaning in the sound of a horse gallop whether set musically or sonically, does not trivialize the meaning of a musical gallop. On the contrary, in film this recognition opens up musical interpretation to new areas by releasing the symbolic potential bound up in iconicity. We may focus on a musical or sonic horse, but in a sound track those two might coexist and interact, drawing on symbolic connotations from both registers. Moreover, freeing up this extramusical space allows for musical insight concerning figures traditionally located outside of the realm of music. For instance, the concept of acousticons has allowed me to consider the conventional gender implications in headphone sound as linked to a history of individuated listening, sound practice in film, and American gender dynamics in the 20th century. Similarly, the acousticon offers a way to understand sound conventions that do not fit squarely into a category such as "music" or "sound effect." The connotative power of echo and reverb is an excellent example of signifying

sound located at the boundary of music and noise. As I have shown, while echo and reverb may be applied to non-musical sounds (that is, as an effect), its link to the history and practice of recording music links it to music, and music in any performance context necessarily bears the imprint of the reverberation of the performing space. Sonic logos, originally based on musical jingles, freely use sonic elements or else eschew their musical roots in favor of designer-manipulated sound, while products are chiefly designed with the connotative potential of their sound in mind as a way of forging a positive connection between product and "experiences."

This study thus offers several possibilities for further research into acousticons. For example, the sound of footsteps could be divided by iconic type (e.g. march, skips) or genre (footsteps in film noire, cartoons). Also, many of the acousticons I have suggested here have other connotations. For instance, reverb is used as a way of invoking nostalgia, but it might also be used in other ways. It can create a sense of isolation, or it might endow a voice with mythic power. The acousticon thus offers a useful perspective on the possibilities of musical and sonic conventions, and a hermeneutic method for interrogating those conventions in actual sound track texts. Yet sound tracks are not the only media in which music and sound conventions blur.

I suggested in chapters 3 and 4 that acousticons may occur in other media. I investigated constructed space in pre-existing musical recordings and then intentional sounds used in marketing and developing products. My intitial focus on cinema was because of its place as a powerful and historical institution in American society. Such an institution with mass appeal allows for the development of intersubjective meaning on a grand scale. Large groups may be enculturated to understand sonic meaning in similar ways. Yet other such institutions—for instance, radio, television, audiovisual images on the Internet, or in restaurant and airport designs—also sound conventionally. Musical recordings and audio branding appear to co-opt

musical and sonic figures in similar ways as they do in film, but acousticons need their own studies devoted to each medium.

Similarly, much of this project is devoted to mapping out dominant uses of acousticons in popular Hollywood films or well-known genres. By limiting myself in this way, I have been able to consider some generic functions of acousticons and how they might appeal to many audiences. However, there is no reason to think that these conventions are monolithic. Like the development of male headphone sound, they may change over time in both their appearance and their meaning. Similarly, these meanings may vary, depending on genre and subculture. More research is needed on how non-dominant groups of producers or consumers may subvert the conventional meanings of these acousticons, or use them in non-normative ways.

Nevertheless, the acousticon as a general concept offers great utility to music scholars interested in analyzing and interpreting musical meaning in the contexts of film and beyond. Without considering how sonic meaning might interact with musical meaning, or how musical meaning might interact with sonic meaning, the analyst is undoubtedly left with only a partial picture of how music works as part of a sound track. Perhaps most importantly, such an approach might help open our ears to the myriad ways sound and music interweave in our everyday lives. With a richer understanding of musical and sonic semiotics, we may gain a more complete appreciation of the sound track of our own lives.

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